



United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



Farmington Field Office

Final

**Environmental Impact Statement
for Riparian and Aquatic
Habitat Management in the
Farmington Field Office – New Mexico
Volume 1**

August 2000

BLM/NM/PL-00-009-1040

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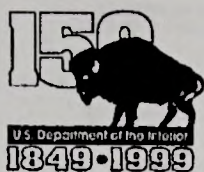
Mission Statement

It is the mission of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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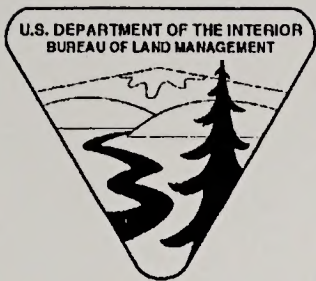
Farmington Field Office

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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401
www.nm.blm.gov



Dear Reader,

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Proposed Farmington Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for riparian and aquatic habitats under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Farmington Field Office. The proposed HMP is based on Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, which was presented and analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for riparian and aquatic habitat management. The public notice of availability of the DEIS was published in the *Federal Register*, and the DEIS was made available to the public October 8, 1999, with a 90-day public comment period followed by a 30-day extension of the public comment period. The Bureau has selected Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, as the agency's preferred alternative. The DEIS is included by reference but not duplicated in this document.

Following release of the DEIS, the BLM held an informal open house followed by a formal public hearing on November 16, 1999, in Farmington, New Mexico, to accept public comments and statements on the DEIS.

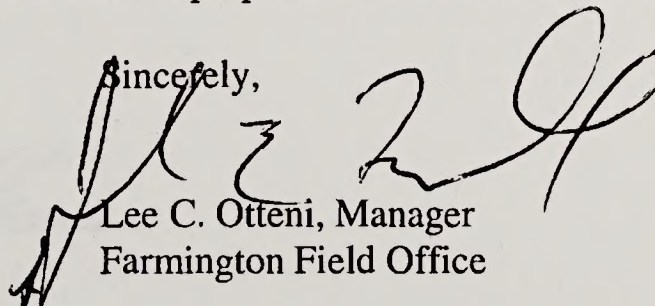
The BLM received comment letters and statements on the adequacy of the DEIS and the merits of the alternatives presented. The public comments resulted in modification of the FEIS.

Following the 30-day availability period for the proposed HMP and the FEIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be prepared for this project, and copies will be sent to those on the project mailing list. Individuals wanting to comment on the changes made in preparing the final HMP or the FEIS should send them to:

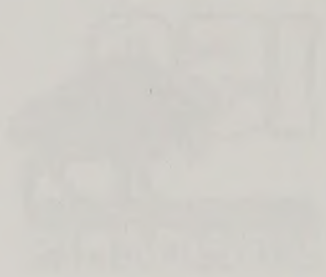
Bob Moore
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401
(505) 599-6311

Any comments received will be considered in preparation of the ROD for this project.

Sincerely,



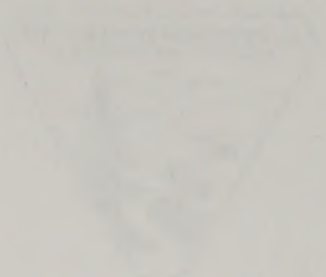
Lee C. Otteni, Manager
Farmington Field Office



Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary

Washington, D.C.
20540-0001



The Department of the Interior is pleased to announce the release of the final report of the study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) on the subject of "The Role of the Federal Government in the Management of the Nation's Forests." The report, which was published in the January 1996 issue of the journal "Forest Science," provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of federal forest management and offers a series of recommendations for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. The report is available for free download from the Department's website at <http://www.doi.gov/forests>.

The study was conducted by a panel of experts in the field of forest management, including representatives from the Department of the Interior, the National Academy of Sciences, and the private sector. The panel's findings are based on a thorough review of the literature and a series of public hearings held throughout the country.

The report identifies a number of key areas for improvement, including the need for a more unified approach to forest management, the need for improved data and information systems, and the need for a more transparent and accountable decision-making process.

The Department is committed to implementing the recommendations of the report and to ensuring that the nation's forests are managed in a sustainable and responsible manner. We encourage all interested parties to contact the Department for more information.

For more information, please contact:
Mr. [Name], Director
Office of the Secretary
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20540-0001
Phone: (202) 219-1234
Fax: (202) 219-5678
E-mail: secretary@do.gov

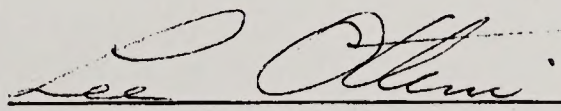
This document is available in English and Spanish.

[Signature]
Secretary of the Interior

ABSTRACT
Environmental Impact Statement
for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management
in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico

Draft () Final (x)

United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

1. Type of Action: Administrative (x) Legislative ()
2. Proposed Action: To restore and protect riparian and aquatic habitats under BLM jurisdiction in the Farmington Field Office, which includes all or parts of San Juan, McKinley, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties, New Mexico.
3. Abstract: This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (Volume 1) includes a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) (Volume 2) based on Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, which was presented and analyzed in the Draft EIS that was issued October 8, 1999. The HMP, Volume 2 of this FEIS, presents an adaptive management model that is applied to each riparian area under BLM jurisdiction. The desired outcome of implementing the HMP is achievement of proper functioning condition for all riparian areas and the protection and restoration of threatened and endangered species habitat.
4. Comments on the Draft EIS from individuals, groups, and agencies, and the BLM responses to these comments are included in Volume 1.
5. For further information contact: Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401
505-599-6311
6. Date Final Filed with EPA:
7. Approved: 
Lee C. Otteni
Field Manager

ABSTRACT

Environmental Impact Statement
for the proposed construction and operation
of the proposed project.

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1. Introduction

2. Project Description

3. Environmental Setting

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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AUM	animal unit month
BE	biological evaluation
BLM	U.S. Bureau of Land Management
BO	biological opinion
CWAP	Clean Water Action Plan
DEIS	draft environmental impact statement
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAR	functional – at risk
FEIS	final environmental impact statement
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy and Management Act
HMP	habitat management plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NF	nonfunctional
NMDG&F	New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
OHV	off-highway vehicle
PFC	proper functioning condition
TR	technical reference
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

SUMMARY

This U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) *Final Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (FEIS) (Volume 1) includes the Farmington Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan (HMP) (Volume 2) for restoring and protecting riparian and associated habitats under the Farmington Field Office jurisdiction. Following public review and comment on the three alternatives presented in the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (DEIS), the BLM selected Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, as the preferred alternative. Implementation of the preferred alternative is discussed in the HMP. Volume 1 of this FEIS contains the public comments received on the DEIS and the associated BLM responses to those comments. This FEIS also contains the Biological Evaluation required under Section 7 of the Threatened and Endangered Species Act. Volume 2 contains the HMP.

Publication of this two-volume FEIS continues a process started by the Farmington Field Office when the public was notified of an opportunity to provide issues and comments on riparian habitat management. During public scoping, individuals presented a number of useful comments that resulted in the presentation and analysis of three alternatives in the DEIS: (1) Current Management, (2) Adaptive Management (Preferred Alternative), and (3) Grazing Management. By selecting the Adaptive Management Alternative, the BLM recognizes the need to incorporate the modern business practices of goal setting and feedback mechanisms in decision making to facilitate changing direction when new information becomes available. The development of a HMP based on adaptive management allows the Farmington Field Office to implement a set of management actions specific to each riparian

area following a common management strategy, which has as its primary goals the restoration and protection of riparian areas.

For over a decade, the BLM has emphasized the restoration and protection of streamside riparian areas for the benefit of watercourse and watershed integrity, unique plant association protection, and threatened and endangered species, as well as for other riparian-dependent species in New Mexico. Although much has been accomplished to meet agency goals for riparian area improvement, much more remains to be done. For example, new data on the current condition of riparian habitats need to be obtained and utilized. In addition, the Farmington Field Office needed to develop and make readily available to the public a set of published goals and objectives representing a desired future condition for riparian areas. By completing the HMP for riparian areas, the Farmington Field Office has demonstrated that riparian and aquatic habitat management is a priority field office activity.

The HMP provides a framework for meeting two primary goals: (1) the attainment of proper functioning condition for all riparian areas and (2) the protection and enhancement of threatened and endangered species habitat. Achievement of these goals entails implementation of the following five steps:

- Survey and analyze riparian conditions,
- Use survey results to describe a desired future condition and to identify appropriate management actions,
- Implement management actions,
- Monitor the success of the management actions, and

SUMMARY

- Modify the management actions, if necessary, on the basis of the monitoring results.

These five steps will be implemented for each of the BLM-administered riparian areas located within the jurisdiction of the Farmington Field Office. Thus, site-specific application of the HMP allows field office staff to account for the individual ecological conditions and dynamics that control the recovery and maintenance of riparian systems. For example, grazing management to protect riparian habitat may include both exclusion of domestic livestock by fencing and the selective application of dormant grazing, depending on the condition and structure of the vegetation in the riparian area.

Graphic materials presented in Volume 2 (the HMP) show the individual riparian areas

under BLM jurisdiction within the context of other features, activities, and land jurisdictions. For example, some figures show the relationship between the riparian areas and livestock grazing allotments. Others show the distribution of riparian areas under BLM jurisdiction relative to the surface hydrology network within the entire Farmington Field Office area. The figures underscore the fact that riparian habitats are a small, but critical, percentage of lands administered by the BLM in New Mexico. In addition, segments of riparian areas under BLM jurisdiction are often only a small part of a larger area under other jurisdictions over which the BLM has no management responsibility or authority. This observation is central to gaining an appreciation for the important, but limited, role that the BLM can exercise in improving and protecting riparian habitats in New Mexico.

1 COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND RESPONSES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (DEIS) was issued October 8, 1999, at which time the public and interested agencies were given 90 days to comment on its content. Thus, the comment period was scheduled to close on January 12, 2000. However, the comment period was extended to February 12, 2000, in response to several requests. During the comment period, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received oral comments at one public hearing; written comments were received in the form of letters, postcards, and e-mails. Section 1.2 of this chapter presents a summary of the comments received during the hearing and associated responses. Section 1.3 contains copies of the comment letters received and presents the associated BLM responses.

1.2 PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

This section presents the comments that were received at the public hearing held on the *DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico*. The hearing was held November 16, 1999, at the Farmington Civic Center, Farmington. Table 1.1 presents summaries of and associated responses to the oral comments. A copy of the complete hearing transcript is available for review at the BLM

Farmington Field Office. The field office can also provide information on obtaining a personal copy of the transcript.

1.3 WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

This section reproduces (from the best available copies) the comment letters received during the review period for the *DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico*, and presents the corresponding BLM responses.¹ In general, the letters have been arranged chronologically according to their dates. Each letter to which the BLM responded has been assigned a letter code, and for each letter, consecutive numbers have been used to designate individual comments and the corresponding BLM responses. The letters and responses are placed side by side on facing pages to the extent possible, so that the specific response to a given comment can be easily located. Multiple copies of a form postcard or e-mail are presented and responded to only once, although recognition is provided as to how many copies of the correspondence were received. Table 1.2 lists the letters and the corresponding codes in the order in which they appear in this section.

¹ Several of the comment letters may contain general (nonsite-specific) comments directed to the four DEISs for riparian and aquatic habitat management prepared for the Albuquerque, Farmington, Las Cruces, and Taos field offices.

CHAPTER 1

TABLE 1.1 Public Hearing Comment Summaries and Responses for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
Public Hearing Held at Farmington Civic Center, Farmington, New Mexico, November 16, 1999	
D. Pickering No. 1: Erosion from roads associated with oil production was not adequately addressed as a significant contributor to riparian and aquatic degradation.	Minor roads constructed to facilitate oil production are rarely constructed for long-term stability, which increases their erosion potential and reduces riparian vegetation, cover, and stream water quality. Generally, any continuous or repeated intense activity causes the most numerous impacts. Oil and gas leasing and development were addressed in BLM's <i>Albuquerque District Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment Final Environmental Impact Statement Oil & Gas Leasing and Development</i> (BLM 1991). That environmental impact statement (EIS) included an assessment of impacts that could occur within the Farmington Field Office. In response to your comment, information on best management practices for reducing erosion and deposition from oil field roads has been added to Table 3.1 of the Habitat Management Plan (Volume 2 of the FEIS).
B. Truby No. 1: It appears that the BLM is attempting to turn "nonriparian" areas (i.e., dry washes) into riparian areas capable of supporting southwestern willow flycatchers.	As discussed in Section 3.1.8 of the DEIS, the Farmington Field Office has about 119 linear miles of riparian habitats. Most of these occur along ephemeral and intermittent drainages. However, almost 100 miles have no potential as southwestern willow flycatcher nesting habitat. Thus, the BLM will not put efforts into those areas to turn them into flycatcher habitat. Management efforts for these "dry wash" areas will be aimed at improving physical, hydrological, and vegetative conditions of these areas to maximize the multiple-use potential of the riparian areas within these ephemeral and intermittent drainages.

TABLE 1.1 (Cont.)

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
B. Truby No. 2: The BLM appears ready to take away grazing permits or to not allow cattle grazing, without having specific or scientific data to support such actions (see p. 1-1 of the Farmington DEIS).	It is not the intention or mandate of the BLM to take away grazing permits in order to protect or enhance riparian and aquatic habitats. However, seasonal restrictions or exclusion on livestock grazing within riparian areas may occur. Nevertheless, this will not preclude grazing within the rest of the allotment. Where riparian exclosures or pastures are established, the BLM will work with the allotment permittee to provide alternative water sources (if necessary) and to address issues related to forage requirements. The scientific and management objectives that the BLM wants to pursue relate to strategies to correct the causes for riparian and habitat degradation within watersheds, rather than trying to simply correct the symptoms of the problem. For example, just replanting native woody species within riparian areas will not correct the problem that caused the original loss of this vegetation.
B. Truby No. 3: It is stated that the BLM wants to eliminate grazing from any tracts that are occupied by southwestern willow flycatchers, but it is stated that there are no historic records of these birds occurring in the area (see pp. 2-4 and 2-5 of the Farmington DEIS).	In regard to the recovery program for the southwestern willow flycatcher, the BLM will only eliminate grazing from riparian areas where flycatcher nesting is occurring (i.e., occupied flycatcher habitat). Current grazing practices will continue for riparian areas that are not currently occupied by flycatchers (unless riparian exclosures or pastures have been established to meet other riparian and aquatic habitat management goals). However, as stated in response to B. Truby No. 2, the BLM will work with the permittee regarding loss of use of the riparian portion on its allotments.
B. Truby No. 4: One of the largest populations of southwestern willow flycatchers in New Mexico is on the U-Bar Ranch, which has cattle grazing. However, the BLM states that cattle grazing is detrimental to this species.	The habitat found on the U-Bar Ranch contains box elder stands, which is different than anything found within the Farmington Field Office.
B. Truby No. 5: On p. 3-4 it states that the months of May through September are frost free, and that the winds are only 5 to 15 miles per hour (mph). However, there has never been a May or September that has not had a freeze, and winds are usually about 30 mph.	Information on the extremes in freezing temperatures and winds that can occur within the Farmington Field Office area has been included in Appendix A (the Addendum to the DEIS) of the FEIS (Volume 1).

CHAPTER 1

TABLE 1.1 (Cont.)

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
B. Truby No. 6: The BLM seems to discuss pronghorn antelope as if they are native species and blame poaching as a possible reason for their decline (see p. 3-9 of the Farmington DEIS). However, they were introduced by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDG&F) and the BLM. The antelope are declining because they are not a native species and have not adapted to the area.	Pronghorn antelope are native to New Mexico and were abundant prior to the 1900s. By the early 1900s, intensive hunting led to their decline to only 1,200 in the State and to only 20,000 throughout the West. Protection and restocking have led to their rebound (e.g., 15,000 in New Mexico by 1967). The NMDG&F does move (transplant) pronghorn throughout the State in an attempt to reestablish the species throughout its former range. Effective management for pronghorns include correcting habitat deficiencies and adverse impacts (e.g., unnecessary roads, wetland drainage, inappropriate herbicide and pesticide use, fire suppression, and uncontrolled mining discharges). Controlled (vs. uncontrolled) livestock grazing management practices can be conducted in harmony with the presence of pronghorns.
B. Truby No. 7: Page 4-3 (Farmington DEIS) states that cattle prefer to graze in streamside riparian habitats. However, cattle will only go into areas such as dry washes to water early in the day, and will then stay out of the area due to flies.	The discussion in Section 4.1.1.1 of the DEIS related to habitat use comparisons between cattle and sheep, with cattle preferring riparian areas more than sheep. It is correct that under certain conditions cattle will only spend minimal time in riparian areas (e.g., when the density of mosquitoes is high or when cold winter winds within a stream valley are excessive). Nevertheless, over the course of a year, cattle spend a significant amount of time in riparian areas because of the presence of water, shade, and succulent vegetation. The riparian and aquatic habitat management goals of the BLM are to enhance or restore these habitats. These goals will require control of livestock use during periods when these habitats are susceptible to overuse and physical disturbance.
B. Truby No. 8: Page 4-4 (Farmington DEIS) states that livestock grazing could be detrimental to riparian vegetation. However, this is not true. If it was, all the areas that have been grazed for years along the riverbanks would be totally bare. In contrast, these areas are so thick with vegetation that you cannot even ride a horse through them.	The potentially detrimental effects of uncontrolled livestock grazing is not limited to denuding an area of vegetation. Livestock grazing, especially combined with other perturbations in a watershed (e.g., mining, roads, irrigation) can alter the vegetative composition and result in an assemblage of species that are of limited use as forage for livestock and of lower value as wildlife habitat (e.g., saltcedar vs. willows).

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

TABLE 1.1 (Cont.)

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
B. Truby No. 9: Page p. 4-23 (Farmington DEIS) states that the impacts will be negligible. However, if ranchers cannot graze their cattle for three or four months, it would result in a significant economic impact to them.	Livestock grazing may be prohibited for part or all of the year in some riparian areas. However, use of the remainder of the allotment will still be permitted. It is recognized in the DEIS that economic impacts could occur to the permittee if riparian grazing is not permitted. However, active management can compensate for potential losses (e.g., use of techniques to attract livestock away from riparian areas, herd management, and husbandry practices). The BLM will cooperate with permittees to make rangeland improvements to compensate for restrictions in riparian area use.
B. Truby No. 10: On the basis of the list of organizations consulted (p. 5-2 of the Farmington DEIS), no ranching organizations were consulted. Nevertheless, environmental organizations that want to eliminate cattle grazing were consulted. The DEIS lacks scientific data and is a slanted document aimed at eliminating cattle grazing.	The New Mexico Cattlegrowers Association has been added to the list of Nongovernmental Organizations that were consulted (see Appendix A of the FEIS [Volume 1]). This organization was accidentally omitted from the listings (it was listed in the other DEISs prepared for riparian and aquatic habitat management in the Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Taos Field Offices). See also the response to J. Truby No. 1 below. The documents cited in Belsky et al. (1999) are peer-reviewed experimental and review papers. Highest priority was given to recent journal articles presenting experimental manipulations. Our literature search uncovered no systematic investigations showing positive impacts or ecological benefits on riparian areas that could be attributed to livestock activities where grazed areas were compared with protected areas. Thus, mostly negative environmental impacts from uncontrolled livestock grazing were presented. Most researchers tend to agree that uncontrolled livestock grazing damages stream and riparian ecosystems. The few benefits from grazing mostly deal with upland areas. However, these benefits largely result under controlled conditions where overgrazing does not occur.

CHAPTER 1

TABLE 1.1 (Cont.)

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
B. Truby No. 11: It is going to take mechanical means (as mentioned on p. 2-10 of the Farmington DEIS) to control erosion in many of the stream reaches. In particular, something has to be done in the upper, narrower reaches to dissipate storm flow energies. Riprapping that has been conducted in some areas years ago is starting to fail.	In some situations, mechanical means (e.g., small diversion dikes, check dams, gabions, rip-rap) in addition to vegetation management would be used to control erosion. The key to success in using such instream and shoreline structures is to try and correct the cause of erosion, while monitoring the effectiveness of the structures so that steps can be taken if they are not producing their desired results.
J. Truby No. 1: The EIS is slanted against grazing. The animal unit months (AUMs) allotted for the Largo area have not increased in years, so you cannot really state that grazing is affecting it.	The grazing impact studies that are referenced in the DEIS are part of the discussion on effects of overgrazing on riparian areas. No scientific papers were found that demonstrated any significant benefits to riparian areas from uncontrolled livestock grazing, particularly during the summer. Most papers that demonstrate benefits from controlled livestock grazing pertain to upland use. Studies and experience within the BLM show that timed and monitored grazing use within riparian areas can provide some benefits, such as seed dispersal and planting, mineral cycling, and wood control. Except for the activists on either side of the grazing debate, most environmental and livestock organizations and federal and state agencies agree that controlled grazing can be conducted while still maintaining natural conditions. However, where riparian degradation has already occurred, grazing may need to be prevented until these areas rehabilitate. Riparian restoration could take up to 10 or more years in extreme cases before livestock grazing would be recommended to be reinstated.
J. Truby No. 2: Recreational use and oil and gas production have increased in the area. A new road was constructed for oil and gas production, but the old road was never reseeded and is washing away.	Other activities that affect the condition of riparian areas were discussed (particularly recreation, water developments, and invasive species). Oil, gas, and mineral extraction were also addressed, as appropriate. The DEIS emphasizes BLM-managed lands, which are generally a small portion of the area within a given watershed. Thus, habitat management primarily relates to livestock use of the riparian areas, since this is the primary use made of most of the riparian areas addressed in the DEIS. See also the response to D. Pickering No. 1.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

TABLE 1.1 (Cont.)

Speaker and Comment Summary	BLM Response
J. Truby No. 3: All studies referenced in the DEIS are slanted against grazing. Before drastic changes are made in grazing plans, both studies that demonstrate that grazing can be beneficial to the area and the capability of the land should be investigated.	See other responses in this chapter regarding comments on scientific data and the position on grazing use in this DEIS (e.g., J. Truby No. 1 and B. Truby No. 10).
J. Truby No. 4: Other activities that affect the condition of the land should be looked at (e.g., oil and gas, wood gathering, and recreation).	See the response to J. Truby No. 2.

CHAPTER 1

TABLE 1.2 Index of Letters Received during the Public Comment Period

Letter Code (Date)	Source (Affiliation)	Page
Misc.1 (various)	Form postcards and e-mails received from 1,451 private citizens.	1-14
Misc.2 (various)	Form e-mails received from 12 private citizens.	1-16
PB (undated)	Paul Bandy (citizen).	1-18
MC (undated)	Marilyn Colyer (citizen).	1-24
CKL (undated)	Clifford K. Larsen, Conservation Chair, Sierra Club, Sante Fe Group - Rio Grande Chapter (environmental organization).	1-26
TMc (undated)	Timothy McKenna (citizen).	1-28
JWM (undated)	Joan W. Montagne (citizen).	1-30
TM (undated)	Tiffani Montoya, Secretary, San Juan Basin Livestock Association (livestock association).	1-32
LJP (undated)	Lloyd J. Perper (citizen).	1-34
RAW (undated)	Robert A. Witzeman, M.D. (citizen).	1-36
MRN (Dec. 22, 1999)	M. Ruth Niswander (citizen).	1-38
LHC (Dec. 27, 1999)	Len H. Carpenter, Field Representative, Wildlife Management Institute (citizens' group).	1-40
JS (Jan., 2000)	Jean Schwennesen (citizen).	1-44
JR (Jan. 4, 2000)	Jon Rhodes (citizen).	1-46
CRW (Jan. 6, 2000)	Charles R. Wilson, Environmental Chairman, New Mexico 4-Wheelers (citizens' organization).	1-48
TTB (Jan. 7, 1999 [sic])	Terrell T. "Red" Baker, Ph.D., Extension Riparian Management Specialist, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service and the Range Improvement Task Force (state organization).	1-54
LD (Jan. 7, 2000)	Linda DeStefano (citizen).	1-60

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

TABLE 1.2 (Cont.)

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RSP (Jan. 7, 2000)	Roger S. Peterson, Secretary, New Mexico Natural History Institute (nonprofit corporation).	1-62
JT (Jan. 7, 2000)	Jennifer Truby (citizen).	1-64
RWW (Jan. 7, 2000)	Richard W. Weiskopf, M.D. (citizen).	1-70
JGP (Jan. 8, 2000)	J.G. Petrofsky (citizen).	1-72
JB (Jan. 9, 2000)	Jeff Burgess (citizen).	1-74
NTJ (Jan. 9, 2000)	Nolan Thomas Jones, Jr. (citizen).	1-78
MBT (Jan. 9, 2000)	Mary Beth Truby (citizen).	1-80
JAA (Jan. 10, 2000)	Joel A. Alderete, Regional Director, New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau (livestock organization).	1-86
SCD (Jan. 10, 2000)	Sam C. deBaca, President, Sandia Jeep Club (citizens' organization).	1-92
TCD (Jan. 10, 2000)	Teresa C. deBaca (citizen).	1-98
JC (Jan. 10, 2000)	James Clark (citizen).	1-100
EC (Jan. 10, 2000)	Elaine Cohen (citizen).	1-102
JD (Jan. 10, 2000)	Jim Dawson (citizen).	1-104
SF (Jan. 10, 2000)	Stefan Fuegi (citizen).	1-106
WH (Jan. 10, 2000)	Warren Harkey (citizen).	1-108
TH (Jan. 10, 2000)	Tim Hodgkins (citizen).	1-110
SH (Jan. 10, 2000)	Steve Hunt (citizen).	1-112

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RSL (Jan. 10, 2000)	Ron and Susan Low (citizens).	1-114
BM (Jan. 10, 2000)	Brad Meiklejohn (citizen).	1-116
FN (Jan. 10, 2000)	Frank Nordstrom (citizen).	1-118
DP (Jan. 10, 2000)	Daniel Patterson (citizen).	1-120
RR (Jan. 10, 2000)	Ruben Rangel (citizen).	1-122
ER (Jan. 10, 2000)	Eric Rechel (citizen).	1-124
TR (Jan. 10, 2000)	Terry Rust, Director of Environmental Affairs, Southwest Four Wheel Drive Association (citizens' organization).	1-126
KS (Jan. 10, 2000)	Kristen Sykes (citizen).	1-132
BT (Jan. 10, 2000)	Barbara Truby (citizen).	1-134
CW (Jan. 10, 2000)	Christina Wulf (citizen).	1-138
PA (Jan. 11, 2000)	Paul Austgen (citizen).	1-140
JB (Jan. 11, 2000)	Jimmy Bason (citizen).	1-142
MB (Jan. 11, 2000)	Meagan Bayless (citizen).	1-148
MEC (Jan. 11, 2000)	Mary Ella Christian (citizen).	1-150
PC (Jan. 11, 2000)	Pete Connal (citizen).	1-156
CCa (Jan. 11, 2000)	Caren Cowan (citizen).	1-158
CCb (Jan. 11, 2000)	Caren Cowan, Executive Secretary, New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association (cattlemen's association).	1-164

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REC (Jan. 11, 2000)	Robert E. Cowan (citizen).	1-172
BE (Jan. 11, 2000)	Bud Eppers, President, New Mexico Public Lands Council (livestock organization)	1-178
TF (Jan. 11, 2000)	Tammy Ferguson (citizen).	1-184
CG (Jan. 11, 2000)	Callie Gnatkowski (citizen).	1-186
GJ (Jan. 11, 2000)	George Johnson (citizen).	1-192
DL (Jan. 11, 2000)	Diann Lee (citizen).	1-194
ML (Jan. 11, 2000)	Mike Lee (citizen).	1-200
MLM (Jan. 11, 2000)	Mrs. Lou McDonald (citizen).	1-206
RLM (Jan. 11, 2000)	Ron L. Merritt, Jr., President, New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc. (sheepmen's organization).	1-212
MM (Jan. 11, 2000)	Michael Mills (citizen).	1-220
KR (Jan. 11, 2000)	Kitty Randall (citizen).	1-222
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RS (Jan. 11, 2000)	Randy Summers (citizen).	1-226
RT (Jan. 11, 2000)	Rachel Thomas (citizen).	1-232
DY (Jan. 11, 2000)	Dick Young (citizen).	1-238
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RB (Jan. 12, 2000)	R. Benne (citizen).	1-242

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FAD (Jan. 12, 2000)	Frank A. DuBois, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, State of New Mexico (state agency).	1-244
MPJ (Jan. 12, 2000)	Michael P. Jansky, P.E., Environmental Review Coordinator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6 (federal agency).	1-256
SJ (Jan. 12, 2000)	Shane Jimerfield, Assistant Director, Center for Biological Diversity (environmental organization).	1-258
JDM (Jan. 12, 2000)	Jeffrey D. Myers, Conservation Chair, Central New Mexico Audubon Society (environmental organization).	1-268
DP (Jan. 12, 2000)	Don Pennington (citizen).	1-270
TDS (Jan. 12, 2000)	Troy D. Sauble (citizen).	1-272
TWS (Jan. 12, 2000)	Tod W. Stevenson, Chief, Conservation Services Division, State of New Mexico Department of Game & Fish (state agency).	1-274
UNK (Jan. 14, 2000)	Unknown (unknown).	1-278
GC (Jan. 20, 2000)	Gedi Cibas, Ph.D., Environmental Impact Review Coordinator, State of New Mexico Environment Department (state agency).	1-280
CB (Jan. 26, 2000)	Cindi Byrns (citizen).	1-288
BB (Jan. 29, 2000)	Bob Brister (citizen).	1-290
BS (Jan. 29, 2000)	Bob Swift (citizen).	1-292
LK (Jan. 30, 2000)	Lincoln Kern (citizen).	1-294
EMS (Feb. 2, 2000)	Edward M. Smith (citizen)	1-296
NC (Feb. 5, 2000)	Nancy Couperus (citizen).	1-298
CRS (Feb. 6, 2000)	Charles R. Sands (citizen).	1-300
WRH (Feb. 10, 2000)	W.R. Humphries (citizen).	1-304

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JCH (Feb. 11, 2000)	John C. Horning, Watershed Protection Program, Forest Guardians (citizens' organization).	1-322
YH (Feb. 11, 2000)	Yung Huang (citizen).	1-330
KL (Feb. 11, 2000)	Kush Lalwani (citizen).	1-332

CHAPTER 1

Misc.1

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the DEIS.

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of BLM. This needs to stop.

Select alternative three, which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.²

² This comment was directed to Robert Moore, BLM Project leader, and received at the BLM Farmington Field Office. It was received as a form postcard or e-mail from 1,451 private citizens. Therefore, it is being responded to only once. Nevertheless, the BLM appreciates the concerns of all individuals who took the time and effort to comment on the *DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (BLM 1999).

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to Misc.1:

It is arguable that the elimination of livestock grazing would be a viable alternative if the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) sole management responsibilities were to maintain, enhance, or restore riparian and aquatic habitats for their ecological value. However, it is the BLM's mandate to manage public land for multiple use. The settlement agreement that necessitated the preparation of the environmental impact statement (EIS) required the inclusion of one alternative that may not conform to current resource management plans. The alternative selected to meet this condition was the grazing alternative. Complete discontinuation of grazing would not conform to the principles of multiple use management under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. (Under certain conditions, grazing could be permanently excluded because of laws such as the Endangered Species Act [ESA] or the Clean Water Act, which require the BLM to take certain actions to protect the environment. These laws are not overridden by the FLPMA.)

Fencing and complete exclusion of grazing from riparian areas are often identified as the only strategies capable of rehabilitating damaged streamside areas. Alternative livestock management systems can be used to improve many riparian areas so that permanent exclusion of grazing may not be necessary. The BLM acknowledges that any grazing practice requires close monitoring of riparian woody species use and bank conditions so that livestock can be promptly removed before any significant damage can occur.

CHAPTER 1

Misc.2

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the DEIS. Please use Current Management, Alternative 1.³

³ This is a paraphrase of a comment directed to Bob Moore, BLM Project Leader, and received at the BLM Farmington Field Office. This comment was received as an e-mail from 12 private citizens. Therefore, it is being responded to only once. Nevertheless, the BLM appreciates the concerns of all individuals who took the time and effort to comment on the *DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (BLM 1999).

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to Misc.2:

Thank you for comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

re. BLM/NM/PL-98-014-1040

Paul Bandy
388 Co. Rd. 2900
Agtee NM 87410

Mr. Bob Moore
B.L. N. Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Santa Fe
Farmington New Mexico 87401

200 JAN 12 AM 11:26
070 FARMINGTON NM

Dear Sir,

I am a permittee on the B.L.N. Farmington district. The American & Trust is on my grazing allotment. The riparian area included within the site has not been grazed either by my livestock or by Hispanic livestock in the 10 years I have owned the allotment.

The condition of this site is noted in your draft E.I.S. as FAR (functional at risk) in spite of the

PB-1

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to PB-1:

A riparian condition of proper functioning condition (PFC) indicates that the riparian area is providing the watershed function unique to riparian areas. A PFC rating does not indicate that the BLM is satisfied with the present condition (e.g., the vegetation may be dominated by nonnative species); a functional-at risk (FAR) rating can be an indication of potential problems unrelated to domestic livestock grazing. The BLM acknowledges that the condition of riparian areas is not determined solely by the presence or absence of domestic livestock grazing.

2)

locks of livestock use, yet many other sites (notably Anson 1 Tract) are rated PFC (Piper functioning condition). This would suggest to me and any reasonable observer not committed to environmentalist dogma that grazing is not the uniformly damaging use it is often portrayed to be.

The real world is most varied and interesting that any document. Management requires flexibility and insight. I think it is foolish and may be damaging to lock land management into an inflexible formula.

PB-1
(cont.)

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

[This page intentionally left blank.]

3.)

... For this reason I support
alternative #1 (current management).

The BLM documents show
an improvement in sagebrush
under current management and
current management must allow
more flexibility in management.
That I think is the message
for good management.

Sincerely,

Paul Bang.

PB-1
(cont.)

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

FROM:

TO: BLM Project Leader

RE: DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

MC-1

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop.

Select **alternative three** which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

MC-2

And amphibians have been eliminated by pesticides
Sincerely,

Nancy Colyer

43393 G Rd N Mancos Co.

*Elyse
Colyer*

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MC-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to MC-2:

The comment is nonspecific; thank you for your comment.



Sierra Club

Santa Fe Group - Rio Grande Chapter

621 Old Santa Fe Trail, Suite 10, Santa Fe, NM 87501 (505) 983-2703

Robert Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
1235 La Plata Highway
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

Pages 4.3-5 of the Draft EIS present a good summary of livestock effects on riparian zones. Congratulations on that statement and, more generally, on the EIS. It provides a useful summary of your accomplishments in riparian improvement.

CKL-1

But we are concerned that not all of your riparian areas are included. We do not have the surveys to check carefully, but from what we have we note that Cutter Canyon (T28-29N R8W) has riparian vegetation; see Wynhoff et al., 1975, Vegetation of Cutter Canyon and Vicinity. USDI--BUREC. 29 pp. We are surprised to find no record of riparian vegetation in any part of Rattlesnake, Thomas, and Reese canyons; is that really correct?

CKL-2

We appreciate why you would prefer the flexible, cheap Adaptive Management Alternative: it proposes high priority for good actions but with no blanket requirements. However, review of all of your riparian areas shows that the ones doing well are the ones from which you have excluded livestock. You say it well (p. 4.5): "Fencing of riparian areas to exclude livestock and establish riparian pastures has been very effective." For reasons made clear on pp. 4.3-5, livestock can be compatible with riparian vegetation only under narrow limits of light, dormant-season grazing. But even under those limits, cattle are not compatible with clean water and untrampled banks. Much of your potential riparian area is now barren--notably in Carrizo, Largo, and La Jara canyons--and needs all the protection it can get if vegetation is to be built up and reasonable flood channels delimited.

We think that the Adaptive Management Alternative is a slightly dressed-up version of Present Management; after all, you have been focusing on riparian repair for at least ten years. We do not argue that present management is bad--you're trying in several areas--but that it could be better. And the way to make it better is to rid the riparian zones of livestock, that is, to select Alternative 3. Alternative 3 should be modified so that its statement on land exchanges is the same as that of Alternative 2.

Scientists and now even some ranchers agree that not every acre of the public lands should be grazed. Surely the tiny percentage of those lands in riparian zones and wetlands, so vital to wildlife and clean water, are among the acres that should not be grazed by livestock.

Sincerely,

Clifford K. Larsen, Conservation Chair

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CKL-1:

In 1994, when the riparian inventory was performed, we did the major washes where we expected there would be significant amounts of riparian habitat. Additional pieces of riparian habitat will be recorded as we continue to complete rangeland health assessments. Any additional habitat found will be managed in accordance with the Habitat Management Plan (HMP).

Response to CKL-2:

A number of riparian areas have recently been fenced to exclude domestic livestock grazing (see the HMP in Volume 2 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Grazing in riparian areas that are not fenced is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment. The BLM is continually addressing issues related to land exchanges. All alternatives presented in the Draft EIS (DEIS) (BLM 1999) provide for the analysis and possible implementation of land exchanges that will benefit the long-term stewardship of riparian habitats.

CHAPTER 1

FROM:

TO: BLM Project Leader

RE: DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

TMc-1

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop.

Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

TMc-2

Sincerely,

Timothy McFinn
P.S. Please compare preferable alternative trail study permit,
fishy stocking, licensing, bike/horse trails. Compare to
subsidized ranch grazing at taxpayer expense

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TMc-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc. 1.

Response to TMc-2:

Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, does not exclude other management activities in riparian areas. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.

CHAPTER 1

FROM: JOAN MONTAGNE
17 HODGMAN CANYON
BOZEMAN, MT 59718

TO: BLM Project Leader

RE: DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

unmanaged
cattle grazing with
no rest/rotation to protect
riparian areas being
used in the
management
plan
implementation

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM.

JWM-1

This needs to stop. BLM and the ranchers need to manage the land

~~Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.~~ I subscribe to Allen Savory's proven holistic grazing methods

Sincerely,

Joan W. Montagne

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JWM-1:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP included with the FEIS (Volume 2) is based on improving and protecting riparian habitats. The plan includes specific management actions for grazing by domestic livestock, to ensure the recovery of the physical and vegetative aspects of riparian areas, and regular monitoring to assess riparian area recovery and function. Holistic grazing is one of the potential grazing management practices that could be utilized, as noted in BLM's Riparian Area Management Technical Reference (TR) 1737-14, *Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas* (BLM 1997).

CHAPTER 1

2003 JAN 13 AM 11:10
070 FARMINGTON, NM
SAN JUAN BASIN LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION
1610 HWY 170
LAPLATA, N.M. 87418


BOB MOORE, PROJECT LEADER
BLM FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE
1235 LAPLATA HWY, SUITE A
FARMINGTON, N.M. 87401

Dear Mr. Moore,

These comments are regarding the EIS for Riparian and Aquatic Management.

- TM-1 First, it seems most of your base reasons for 'restoring' riparian areas is to provide potential habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. As stated on page 2-3 of your draft, "Within the Farmington Field Office area, no breeding southwestern willow flycatchers have been observed on public lands, and there is no historic record of their nesting on lands administered by the BLM." That makes it plain that it is unreasonable to spend all this time and money, and take away from permittees to reintroduce something that never was. This is nothing but a ploy from the extreme "environmentalist" groups to reduce, restrict, and eventually eliminate grazing from public lands.
- TM-2 On page 2-11 it states that The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the 'conventional wisdom' that grazing is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time. Then on page 4-5 it says that dormant season use, between Nov. 1 and March 15, can improve the condition of the riparian vegetation. This book is filled with conflicting statements.
- TM-3 On page 4-23 it talks about providing alternative water access, installing wells, , developing springs, or transporting water. This all sounds good enough, but to actually do it is another thing. Who is going to haul water, as this is very time consuming and expensive? Does the BLM pay for the costs including labor and maintenance? It says that the riparian areas contribute to such a small percent of the allotments that it can be compensated, but water, no matter how small an area, is very important, especially in dry years when wells and springs can easily dry up.
- TM-4 On 5-1 and 5-2 Agencies and Organizations Consulted, there aren't any livestock agencies, such as the NM Cattle Growers, the Wool Growers, or even Paragon listed as being consulted. A lot of the literature from these groups like the Forest Guardians, etc. is not based on facts, but someone's opinion.
- TM-5 We, as a livestock association, recommend using Alternative 1, Current Management. We ask that the BLM have a realistic look at all conditions before making drastic changes that can affect our livelihood.

THANK YOU,


SAN JUAN BASIN LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION
Ted Graham- President
Paul Bandy- Vice President
Tiffani Montoya- Secretary

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TM-1:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to TM-2:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP contained in this document. Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing. The statement on dormant season grazing is based on technical studies and BLM survey data that analyze grazing practices and vegetation response.

Response to TM-3:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to TM-4:

It is not the intent of the BLM to exclude any entity, agency, organization, or private citizen from providing input to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Public scoping and public comment on the DEIS provide an opportunity for all parties to participate equally in the NEPA process. The organizations listed in the DEIS participated during public scoping and public comment on the DEIS and did not have input outside of these public participation activities. The BLM is solely responsible for the production of the DEIS, FEIS, HMP, and Record of Decision.

Response to TM-5:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

FROM: Lloyd J. Perper
6700 W. EL CAMINO DEL CERRO
TUCSON, AZ. 85745

TO: BLM Project Leader
RE: DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

LJP-1

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop.

Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

exception: allow 10% of 1999 grazing levels.

Sincerely,

L J Perper

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to LJP-1:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) is based on improving and protecting riparian habitats. The plan includes specific management actions for grazing by domestic livestock, to ensure the recovery of the physical and vegetative aspects of riparian areas, and regular monitoring to assess riparian area recovery and function. Adjusting grazing levels is one of the potential grazing management practices that could be utilized, as noted in BLM Riparian Area Management TR 1737-14 (BLM 1997).

CHAPTER 1

FROM:

ROBERT A. WITZEMAN, M.D.
4619 E. Arcadia Ln.
Phoenix, AZ 85018

TO: BLM Project Leader

RE: DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

RAW-1

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop.

RAW-2

Select **alternative three** which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

Please extend the time period for comment,
Sincerely,

Robert Witzeman

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RAW-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to RAW-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Dec. 22, 1999

Farmington Resource Area
 1235 La Plata Highway
 Farmington, N.M. 87401
 Dear Sirs;

MRN-1

I understand that the BLM has issued four separate draft management plans that could eliminate commercial livestock grazing on 400 miles of streams in New Mexico. The plans each include three alternatives, and one of these calls for no grazing on riparian areas! Yet, you have not chosen this excellent alternative that would keep streams undisturbed by commercial grazing. I urge you to reconsider and choose more wisely! Choose the alternative that bans grazing along streams — for the sake of water quality, wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

Please adopt the no-grazing alternative! Thank you.

WN 'NO G RAZING' 020

62 E 11 22 DEC 1999

Rm

Sincerely,
 M. Ruth Niswander
 623 Barbera
 Davis, Ca. 95616

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MRN-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.



Wildlife Management Institute

Len H. Carpenter, Field Representative
4015 Cheney Drive • Fort Collins, Colorado 80526
Phone (970) 223-1099 • Fax (970) 204-9198

E-mail: lenc@verinet.com

ROLLIN D. SPARROWE
President

RICHARD E. McCABE
Vice-President

December 27, 1999

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am the Southwest Field Representative for the Wildlife Management Institute. The Institute is a private, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization founded in 1911 and dedicated to the restoration, conservation, and sound management of natural resources, especially wildlife, in North America. I have the following comments on the DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office.

Given the importance of riparian areas to a wide variety of wildlife species it is important that they be managed appropriately. This is especially true for the limited areas of riparian habitat on public lands. The legal action that triggered the additional emphasis on the riparian resources points out importance of improving management on riparian areas. Given this history, it is important that changes in management be made soon to improve these areas.

The Farmington office is to be commended for taking a step in the right direction by choosing Alternative 2, or the Adaptive Management Alternative as opposed to choosing Alternative 1, or the Current Management Alternative. However, given the importance of riparian areas to a wide variety of terrestrial and aquatic species it is critical that necessary management be implemented soon. The importance of this decision is highlighted by the fact that there are 110.9 miles of riparian habitat currently being grazed in the Farmington Field Office area. This is a considerable amount of riparian habitat that needs corrective management applied.

The problem with the Adaptive Management Alternative is that it is stated (page S-6) that grazing in riparian areas could be reduced from current levels, if data collection and analysis indicated the

LHC-1

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to LHC-1:

The Adaptive Management alternative places emphasis and priority on restoration and protection of riparian habitats. To the extent that livestock grazing is allowed to continue, it will be managed consistent with this priority. For example, the riparian portions of the grazing allotments that contain currently potential habitat for the southwestern willow flycatchers have already been fenced to exclude livestock grazing. Under the Adaptive Management alternative, all riparian habitats will be monitored regularly to determine their condition and identify trends. Appropriate management actions will be taken to restore and protect riparian habitats.

CHAPTER 1

2

LHC-1
(cont.)

need to alter current grazing practices. It does not state that grazing would be reduced. It is just this kind of management that prompted the legal action. It is time to get beyond the point of procrastination.

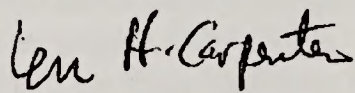
LHC-2

Further, given the wide range of literature and experience with livestock grazing on riparian areas in the Southwest, the negative impacts of livestock grazing on riparian areas are well known as are benefits of removing livestock grazing. Therefore, to meet stated goals of the riparian management program the more appropriate alternative is Alternative 3, or the Grazing Management Alternative that would exclude the 110.9 miles of habitat from domestic livestock grazing.

For these reasons, the Institute urges the BLM to meet its long-term resource stewardship responsibilities by selecting Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for the FEIS.

Thanks for the opportunity for comment. Please be sure I receive a copy of the FEIS.

Sincerely,



Len H. Carpenter

cc:

R. Sparrowe, WMI

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to LHC-2:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

1/2000

JS-1

I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON THE DEIS
FOR RIPARIAN & AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT,
~~DETERMINING~~ ~~WHETHER~~ ~~TO~~ ~~ALLOW~~ ~~CATTLE~~ ~~GRAZING~~ -
WHILE THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT GRAZING CAN
BE DETRIMENTAL, THERE IS ALSO NO DOUBT
(WITNESS THE GLOBE-MIAMI MILK SPOILS IN AZ)
THAT ~~GRAZING~~ CAN ALSO BE RESTORATIVE - IF
IS THE MANAGEMENT & USE OF A TOOL, TOWARDS
A GOAL THAT IS IMPORTANT - TO ELIMINATE
TOOLS IS ENTIRELY TOO LIMITING.

Alan Schwensen

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JS-1:

Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage.

CHAPTER 1



Center for Biological Diversity GIS Shop <gis@sw-center.org> on 01/04/2000
02:13:53 PM

To: rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management
:

Name: Jon Rhodes
Address: 2330 SE Taylor St.
City: Portland
State: OR
Zip: 97214
Phone: 503-731-1307

JR-1

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments: I strongly recommend that the BLM adopt an alternative that excludes all livestock from all riparian areas until the areas have fully recovered. I am a hydrologist with more than 18 years of professional experience working on water quality and land use issues. My experience clearly indicates that grazing rest is the only way to ensure that riparian areas recover. The agency's track record clearly indicates that it is unable to administer riparian grazing in a sound fashion. Therefore, the BLM should ensure that publicly-owned riparian areas and water quality are protected by adopting an alternative that prohibits riparian livestock grazing for at least 10 years.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Jon Rhodes

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JR-1:

The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another; however, periods of rest are important to ensure healthy plants. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but tailored to fit the livestock operation. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. When grazing contributes to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment.

CHAPTER 1

6 January 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

2000 JAN 10 PM 1:28
070 FARMINGTON, NM

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DEIS FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT
MANAGEMENT IN THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As Environmental Chairman, I have prepared these comments on behalf of the New Mexico 4-Wheelers, an Albuquerque-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles. NM4W's members make extensive recreational use of lands administered by your office and are concerned about the direction the preferred alternative is taking.

CRW-1

In reviewing your DEIS, I have found your proposed approach to managing riparian and aquatic habitats to be unacceptable and irresponsible. I regret having come to this conclusion because NM4W members have worked with BLM staff to promote balanced, multi-purpose use of our public lands and have found those staff members to be both knowledgeable and responsible people. My conclusions stem not only from my concern for preserving primitive roaded recreational opportunities on public lands but also from my concern that public lands should continue to be managed in a manner that considers all needs. For these reasons, the New Mexico 4-Wheelers support the balanced approach to riparian and aquatic habitat management provided by your current program, which has been identified, inappropriately, as the "no-action alternative."

The specific reasons for my conclusions are summarized as follows.

CRW-2

Single-Minded Purpose of Preferred Alternative 2 Ignores Common Sense and Good Management Practice. As stated on p. 2-8 of the DEIS, "... the Adaptive Management Alternative seeks first to do what is necessary to ensure the restoration and protection of riparian areas and then to permit those other uses to the extent that they are compatible with the protection and restoration of riparian resources." The preferred alternative subrogates *all* other uses to the preservation and restoration of riparian resources. This is blind, unbalanced management. Although riparian habitat is important, circumstances will arise where the need to preserve riparian resources must be weighed against other important and legitimate needs such as prehistoric and historic resource preservation, recreation and facility development, and public access. It is not good management practice to bind your hands with a policy that keeps you from weighing the multitude of needs on their own merits and coming to management decisions that make sense. Riparian resource preservation will not always be the best and highest

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CRW-1:

Thank you for your comment. The No Action Alternative is presented as Alternative 1, Current Management, in the DEIS and represents the continuation of current management plans aimed at a balanced multiple use of public land.

Response to CRW-2:

Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, does not exclude other management activities in riparian areas. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.

CHAPTER 1

CRW-2 | management objective at all riparian locations. Alternative 2 does not make good management sense and should be rejected.

CRW-3 | **Alternative 3 Grazing Management also Ignores Good Management Practice and Common Sense.** As stated on p. 2-11 of the DEIS, "Under the Grazing Management Alternative, the Farmington Field Office would eliminate grazing by domestic livestock in riparian areas ..." The blanket elimination of grazing, or any other legitimate use of public lands, without consideration of site-specific conditions and mitigation measures is also blind, unbalanced management. Again, it is not good management practice nor the best and highest use of public lands to adopt a policy that constrains the BLM from making decisions based on the merits of each situation. It is entirely possible that grazing would be compatible with riparian protection in many areas, as illustrated in my next comment. Alternative 3 does not make good management sense and should also be rejected.

CRW-4 | **Other Uses are Compatible with Good Riparian Management.** Table 1.1 of the DEIS provides a summary of Farmington Field Office riparian areas, their current use, and their known condition. Returning riparian areas to the PFC (Proper Functioning Condition) state is indicated in the DEIS as the ultimate objective of BLM's management plans. Of the 16 riparian areas listed in the table stated to currently be in the desired proper functioning condition, five are either currently grazed or trespass grazed. Having nearly one-third of the properly functioning wetlands currently experiencing grazing strongly indicates that good riparian management and grazing are not incompatible if properly managed. Although only grazing use was mentioned in the table, in the area administered by the Taos Field Office two out of the four properly functioning riparian areas were identified as also having ORV use. Again, this data indicates that good riparian management and ORV use are not incompatible if properly managed. It is clear that other uses such as grazing, ORV, hiking, and fishing can be compatible with a properly functioning riparian area and should not be automatically excluded. Options such as Alternative 3 that automatically brand certain uses as incompatible should not even be considered. In fact, Table 1.1 provides good evidence that Alternative 3, or any other alternative that promotes a blanket ban on a particular activity, is completely inappropriate. The BLM is self-identified as a *management* agency. There are many legitimate uses of public lands and the first management reaction to a problem should be to seek mitigation, not closure.

CRW-5 | **Allocation of Funding as First Priority.** By assigning the Farmington Field Office's highest priority as protecting and restoring riparian areas as indicated on p. 2-7 under the preferred alternative, it follows that other legitimate needs and uses of public lands managed by your office would suffer from a significant lack of funding while riparian management was vigorously pursued. This is not a good management policy because many of your other important programs, such as biodiversity enhancement and T&E species protection in non-riparian areas, would unduly suffer. It should be clear that there are many important issues that need attention on public lands administered by the BLM, not just riparian habitat protection. It is suggested on p. S-1 in your summary statements that part of the legal objection to your current riparian management approach was that

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CRW-3:

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 3, Grazing Management, addresses public input and issue identification received by the BLM during the scoping process.

Response to CRW-4:

Except for Alternative 3, Grazing Management, current or future allowed activities or actions (e.g., recreation or grazing) will be based on the site-specific requirements or management needs of individual riparian areas.

Response to CRW-5:

Developing budget priorities has and will continue to be a challenge for public and private organizations. The BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

CHAPTER 1

CRW-5

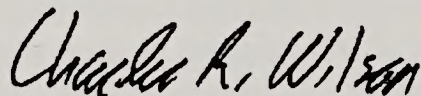
you have been proceeding too slowly due to a lack of funding. I submit that if riparian protection on public lands was of overriding interest compared to all other uses for a majority of the American people, the funding needed to provide that protection would have been there for you. The fact that it was not indicates that the criticality you attribute to riparian protection in preferred Alternative 2 does not reflect the opinion of the majority of Americans but only of the relatively small group that filed the lawsuit. The best use of your limited funds is to continue with what you should be doing: provide balanced support for all legitimate uses of the lands you manage.

CRW-6

Not a Good Precedent to Set in Responding to a Lawsuit. It is clear that riparian area protection is receiving the current high level of attention in response to a lawsuit. Your reaction has been to satisfy that legal challenge by making riparian area protection superior to all other needs for management of public lands. Suppose the Navajo Nation filed a lawsuit contending that your protection of their ancestral sites was not being pursued with sufficient vigor. Would you then turn around and make protection of prehistoric and historic resources your number one priority? You are not setting a good precedent in responding to the riparian habitat lawsuit in the manner proposed in the DEIS. As a citizen, I believe that adopting Alternative 2 would be a serious overreaction to the riparian protection lawsuit and a bad precedent to set in responding to future lawsuits.

In summary, I urge you to reconsider your priorities and maintain the balanced management posture you have held for so many years by adopting Alternative 1.

Sincerely,



Charles R. Wilson, Environmental Chairman
New Mexico 4-Wheelers
5 Dulce Road
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
Tel/Fax 505-466-2183

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CRW-6:

Thank you for your comment; your opposition to Alternative 2 is noted. The BLM has been emphasizing riparian habitat protection and improvement for over 10 years. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY 200 JAN 13 PM 9:09

BOX 3AE, LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO 88003-0031
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

070 1111111111

January 7, 1999

Bob Moore
Project Leader
Farmington Field Office
USDI Bureau of Land Management
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Dear Mr. Moore,

On behalf of the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service and the Range Improvement Task Force, I am writing in response to the Draft EIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office. Pursuant to your request for comments prior to January 12, 1999 and our mandate to provide guidance to land managers in New Mexico, I ask you to consider the following.

- (1) I question the designation of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management Alternative) as the Preferred Alternative given the potential economic impacts to permittees (see p. 4-23 and 4-24) when it is explicitly stated in the Summary (p. S-1) that "each alternative is capable of accomplishing the proposed action of restoring and protecting riparian habitats on lands under BLM jurisdiction". If the proposed riparian restoration can be accomplished without socioeconomic impact to local producers and economies with the Current Management Alternative (see p. 4-19), why not consider this the Preferred Alternative. Although certain management adjustments might have to be made to achieve the proposed riparian restoration, they could be accomplished under the Current Management Alternative without unnecessarily compromising the socioeconomic condition of local economies. Many of the sources you have cited contain guidance for managing livestock and sustaining riparian areas simultaneously (BLM 1997, BLM 1999, see also Elmore and Kauffman 1994). I would also suggest that your goals and objectives could be accomplished using controlled grazing systems with the Current Management Alternative without going to the extra expense and labor, and without adversely impacting the permittees as would occur with the Preferred Alternative. It appears that your Las Cruces Field Office feels similarly in that they have listed the Current Management Alternative as the Preferred Alternative.

TTB-1

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TTB-1:

The Adaptive Management Alternative was selected because it places emphasis on restoration and protection of riparian habitats, while providing for continuation of livestock grazing and flexibility for adjusting management strategy in response to changing situations. The Current Management Alternative is appropriate for the Las Cruces Field Office because the recent *Mimbres Resource Management Plan* (BLM 1993b) places priority on protecting riparian values, whereas the FEIS supplements the older Farmington Resource Management Plan by adding riparian emphasis in the Adaptive Management Alternative.

CHAPTER 1

- | | |
|-------|--|
| TTB-2 | <p>(2) I encourage you to include in your final EIS more detailed descriptions of the methods used to assess riparian area health and the sources of impacts. You describe light, moderate, and heavy grazing but make no attempt to define these levels or the method of measurement. Is this purely qualitative or were actual field measurements taken? It would also be appropriate to describe in greater detail the rating systems for riparian areas. In particular, given the subjective nature of the PFC method for assessing riparian function and the importance of having the most qualified personnel conduct this assessment, it is necessary to provide some evidence referring to the qualifications of the team that conducted the assessment. I also remind that the PFC method is not designed to be used along ephemeral stream systems nor is it designed to substitute for a quantitative monitoring method. You also refer to ORV use and the presence of roads but make no mention of how the effects of these impacts were measured. Whereas research on the impacts of livestock grazing on aquatic habitats has been inconclusive (Rinne 1999) and research addressing the impacts of livestock grazing on endangered or threatened species is incomplete, the scientific literature is replete with evidence of the negative effects of ORV's and roads on riparian and aquatic habitat.</p> |
| TTB-3 | <p>(3) Along similar lines, the Draft EIS dismisses detailed analyses of recreation use and mineral development (to be read inclusive of all mining activities including gravel mining) as being necessary despite the comments received to this effect during the public scoping. According to the Draft EIS, these are not significant issues as compared to livestock grazing (p. 2-14). I submit that these uses have equal if not more potential to affect riparian and aquatic health than livestock grazing and that excluding these impacts could threaten attempts to achieve true riparian and aquatic sustainability.</p> |
| TTB-4 | <p>(4) The Draft EIS also states that Alternative 3 is "a response to the conventional wisdom that domestic livestock grazing is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed to occur at any time". First, I question the term "conventional wisdom". Will conventional wisdom be allowed to determine the use of public riparian areas in favor of scientific evidence? Although the Draft EIS goes on to state that there is considerable literature to support the contention that removal of livestock would result in an improvement in riparian areas, there is also considerable literature that supports closely managed grazing regimes in favor of complete livestock exclusion. While excessive livestock grazing undoubtedly affects riparian and aquatic habitats, eliminating reasonable levels of grazing probably will not result in the dramatic improvements indicated by the Draft EIS and "conventional wisdom". This is particularly true when, as in most cases, there are numerous other impacts such as mining, recreation, ORV use, roads, and deteriorating upland watershed conditions. A majority of the Draft EIS seems to be a response to the "conventional wisdom" and the lawsuit based on that "conventional wisdom" that domestic livestock grazing is inappropriate. Why not use this opportunity to embrace scientific evidence and the exploration of the true relationships between livestock grazing and riparian and aquatic health.</p> |

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TTB-2:

The methodology for conducting PFC analysis described in BLM TR 1737-15, *A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lotic Areas* (BLM 1998), is used to determine the current functioning condition of riparian habitats in lotic areas. The methodology described in TR 1737-11, *Process for Assessing Proper Functioning Condition for Lentic Riparian-Wetland Areas* (BLM 1994a), is used for lentic areas. Members of BLM interdisciplinary teams who conduct PFC analyses are trained in the methodology. Use of riparian areas by off-highway vehicles (OHVs) for recreation or other purposes is considered in the PFC assessment.

Response to TTB-3:

The potential effects of mineral development and recreational activities on riparian habitats were considered in the formative stages of the EIS preparation, including public scoping. However, they were considered to be adequately addressed in current stipulations applying to those activities.

Response to TTB-4:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

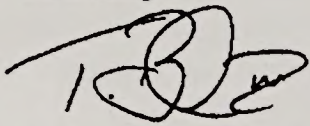
CHAPTER 1

TTB-5

- (5) Regarding methods for monitoring and the qualifications of the personnel conducting data collection, the validity of the data and the collection procedures, regardless of the alternative chosen, may be improved if they are outlined in the final EIS and made available to be commented on accordingly. Also, additional information needs to be provided regarding fencing riparian areas. Who will be responsible for constructing and maintaining fences? How will the width of the fenced area be determined? If fences are constructed to provide the most rapid restoration of riparian areas, will they also exclude large wild ungulates and will watering gaps for wildlife and livestock be provided?

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS for the Farmington Resource Area. Please feel free to call if I can be of any assistance during the remainder of the process.

Sincerely,



Terrell T. "Red" Baker, Ph.D.
Extension Riparian Management Specialist

cc:

John Fowler, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Range Improvement Task Force

Ron Parker, Ph.D.
Department Head, Extension Animal Resources

Literature Cited

- Elmore, W., and J.B. Kauffman. 1994. Riparian and watershed systems: Degradation and restoration. *In: Ecological implications of livestock herbivory in the West*, M. Vavra, W.A. Laycock, and R.D. Piper (eds.). Society for Range Management, Denver, CO. pp.212-231.
- Rinne, J. N. 1999. Fish and grazing relationships: The facts and some pleas. *Fisheries* 24: 12-21.
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1998. Riparian Area Management: A User's Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lotic Areas. TR 1737-15, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Denver, Colorado.
- U.S. Bureau of Land Management. 1997. Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas. TR 1737-14, National Riparian Service Team, Prineville, Oregon.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TTB-5:

Monitoring protocols are described in the BLM 1737 TR series, particularly TR 1737-6 (*Management Techniques in Riparian Areas* [BLM 1992a]), TR 1737-7 (*Procedures for Ecological Site Inventory – with Special Reference to Riparian-Wetland Sites* [BLM 1992c]), TR 1737-8 (*Greenline Riparian-Wetland Monitoring*) [BLM 1993a], TR 1737-11 (*Process for Assessing Proper Functioning Condition for Lentic Riparian-Wetland Areas* [BLM 1994a]), TR 1737-12 (*Using Aerial Photographs to Assess Proper Functioning Condition of Riparian-Wetland Areas* [BLM 1996b]), TR 1737-13 (*Observing Physical and Biological Change through Historical Photographs* [BLM 1996a]), TR 1737-14 (*Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas* [BLM 1997]), and TR 1737-15 (*A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lotic Areas* [BLM 1998]). Management fences are constructed specifically to prevent access by domestic livestock yet allow access by wildlife, including large ungulates. Exclosure fences for scientific studies are designed to prevent or allow access in accordance with the purpose of the study.

CHAPTER 1

5031 Onondaga Rd.

Syracuse, New York 13215-1403

Jan. 7, 2000

2000 JAN 12 AM 11:27

From: (Ms.) Linda DeStefano

Linda DeStefano 070 FARMINGTON, NM

To: Pam Herrera, BLM Project Leader, Taos, NM

Jim Silva, Albuquerque Project Leader

Bob Moore, Farmington Project Leader ✓

Bill Merhege, Las Cruces BLM

Re: public comments on alternative draft management plans re
'livestock' grazing along riparian habitats

LD-1

I strongly favor the choice which would totally eliminate the
grazing of 'livestock' in riparian areas.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to LD-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

NEW MEXICO NATURAL HISTORY INSTITUTE

A Nonprofit Corporation

1750 Camino Corrales
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505-7502

200 JAN 10 PM 1:16

070 FARMINGTON, NM

7 January 2000

Robert Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
1235 La Plata Hwy., Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

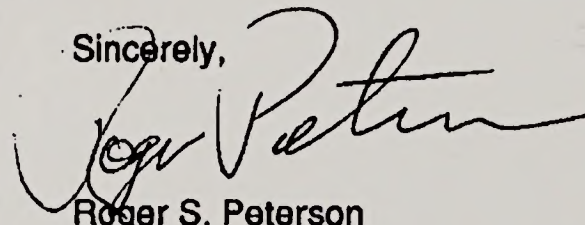
Thank you for opportunity to comment on your DEIS "Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management." Its scientific pronouncements seem fair and thorough.

You know (and you say, p. 4.5) that fencing and exclusion of livestock is the effective means to get riparian recovery. We agree with that, and therefore favor Alternative 3. You should too.

RSP-1

Not wanting to commit to fencing all riparian areas, you prefer Alternative 2 (which is Alternative 1 dressed up with some pretty language). But even were you to allow livestock into riparian areas for a little dormant-season grazing, which might not much harm the vegetation, you would at the same time be allowing those livestock to foul streambeds and to trample banks. You have to build fences anyway to restrict grazing to permissible season and intensity. Why not just admit that, build the fences, exclude livestock, get maximal recovery, and please a large segment of the public?

Sincerely,



Roger S. Peterson
Secretary

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RSP-1:

The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource, but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment.

CHAPTER 1

January 7, 2000
P.O. Box 1498
Aztec, NM 87410

Bob Moore
BLM, Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

2000 JAN 10 PM 1:31
070 FARMINGTON, NM

Dear Mr. Moore:

These comments are regarding the EIS for Riparian and Aquatic Management.

- JT-1 | First and foremost, I find it disheartening that an agency such as the BLM would base it's whole management plan on current public opinion. You are being pressured by vocal and wealthy "environmental" concerns to reduce, restrict, and/or remove grazing from public lands. Many BLM employees promote the propoganda put forth by these "environmental" factions. In fact, the healthy ecosystem that exists in the Farmington District has supported multiple uses for many years, and would continue to do so.
- JT-2 | On page S-2 you express a desire to develop new riparian areas. The current environmental theory is to return the land to it's original state (whatever that is deemed to be). Changing the land to be something it has not been before would not follow with that theory. It certainly does not take in to consideration the limiting physical and environmental conditions. If the area were capable of being riparian, wouldn't it have evolved into that already?
- JT-3 | Page 2-3 states that the willow flycatcher HMP outlines techniques to protect, improve, or re-establish the species, then goes on to say that no breeding or nesting flycatchers have historically been found on public land in this district. You cannot logically defend creating habitat for a species that does not exist here.
- JT-4 | On page 2-14 you indicate that impacts from recreation and natural resource development are insignificant compared to grazing, because they are being "effectively managed". I feel that grazing is the only land use you have any control of, and so you choose to manage small livestock operators to the fullest extent possible. We have repeatedly, over the past several years asked for the BLM to look into a gas line leak on the school house bench. Much vegetation has died, but nothing has been done. We also brought to your attention that a new road had been built in the bull pasture, but the old road has never been reseeded. Do you only manage "effectively" for a chosen few?
- JT-5 | Page 4-3 indicates that cattle cause more severe damage than elk or buffalo with their hooves. The hooves of these animals are not drastically different. As no range cons were present during the free range days of the buffalo, how can we really know how much damage they did or didn't do? Writings from that time speak

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JT-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to JT-2:

Viable riparian areas can be created artificially or by assisting natural processes. For example, wetlands can be created by digging impoundments for small ponds, by irrigating lands, and by controlling seepage from springs or earthen dams. Wetlands can also be created by assisting natural processes, for example, by relocating beavers to new stream reaches. The creation of new riparian areas will only be considered at sites that have a high potential for success. For example, areas with a high potential for erosion or with naturally high soil salinity would not be selected.

Response to JT-3:

See the response to B. Truby No. 1 (Table 1.1) and the expanded discussion on the southwestern willow flycatcher presented in Section B.2.16 (Appendix B, Volume 1 of the FEIS). In addition, productive riparian areas are important for southwestern willow flycatchers even when they do not contain requirements necessary for nesting. Most small landbirds, especially long-distance migrants such as southwestern willow flycatchers, require stopover habitats for refueling as they migrate between their wintering and breeding grounds. Riparian wetlands, especially those with native shrubs, such as willows, provide stopover areas needed by willow flycatchers and other neotropical migrants.

Response to JT-4:

See the responses to D. Pickering No. 1 and J. Truby No. 2 (Table 1.1). The cause of the dead vegetation is currently being investigated but nothing definitive has yet been found. Operators are required to rehabilitate roads on public land when they are abandoned.

Response to JT-5:

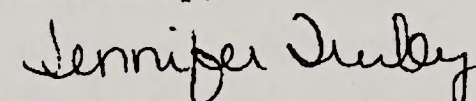
The discussion in Section 4.1.1.1 of the DEIS referred to damage caused by cattle in drier areas of the West where bison did not historically occur. Also, bison primarily lived in prairies rather than woody riparian areas. Cattle and bison differ in forage selection, thermoregulation, and social organization. For example, cattle forage on a high percentage of forbs and woody vegetation, which in grassland ecosystems occur in riparian zones. Thus, cattle are more likely to impact riparian zones (Fritz et al. 1999). Compared with cattle, bison also tolerate higher temperatures but do not need to be close to water and shade. Climate, stocking rates, and selective foraging pressures are important factors that need to be considered when comparing the effects of large grazers. Deer, elk, and bison damage riparian areas when their populations have expanded beyond their long-term carrying capacities because of protection, lack of predators, limited forage space, and so forth. Factors considered in determining grazing prescriptions will include an examination of the behavior of livestock and wildlife, along with forage selectivity (BLM 1997).

CHAPTER 1

J. Truby
Riparian, Page 2

- JT-5
(cont.) of buffalo "wallows". And didn't the Plains Indians follow the migration of these herds, as they depleted one grazing area and move on to the next? A classic example of rotation grazing. As for cattle congregating in wet areas, casual observance would show you that they go in, water, and leave, because of the high insect concentration.
- JT-6 You congratulate yourselves on page 4-4 for the impact of "current grazing strategies". We have, for many years, followed the management plan developed by the BLM. If you now find that the permit is not in proper functioning condition, whose fault is that? In fact, at least 95% of range condition is due to weather, not
- JT-7 Page 4-23 claims the proposed plan will have a negligible effect on operations. In fact, for the small, year round operator it will have a major effect.
- JT-8 And, on page 5-2 it is evident that you had no input from any livestock organization in the preparation of this draft.
- JT-9 Finally, why do all BLM studies lately deal only with grazing as affecting the land? The actual AUM's in the Largo have decreased during my lifetime, but recreational and resource development use has greatly increased. Anyone can connect the effect of more roads, and more traffic both on and off road. For every study quoted in this draft showing the negatives of grazing, there is another showing the opposite. Had you invited the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association to contribute to the draft, this would have been evident.
- JT-10 I recommend following the current management plan, and that you take a realistic look at the capabilities of the land, and the effects of other land use activities before making drastic changes in the current management plan.
- JT-11 We have followed your management plan, made voluntary cuts in AUM's, and provided a great deal of supplemental feed during dry periods. Yet, you feel the need to very nearly put us out of business to satisfy current public opinion. You seem to be more concerned with political correctness than with sound land management.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Truby

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JT-6:

This comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

Response to JT-7:

The BLM does not expect to have to reduce the animal unit months (AUMs) on any allotment associated with riparian and aquatic habitat management activities. Any required fencing or supplemental watering sources will be funded by the BLM, unless prior agreements stipulate other funding arrangements. During the period of management to improve the condition of a riparian area, the permittee may need to incur the costs associated with supplying supplemental forage (e.g., lease private pastures, improve the public land). The ranchers and other users that may be most affected by riparian management will be those currently conducting activities or practices that are not in concert with achieving PFC. The permittees that could be most affected by establishment of riparian pastures/exclosures would be those with small one-pasture allotments. The BLM agrees that if a rancher goes out of business, he/she is not going to enjoy the prosperity of the long-term improvements in habitat management. To provide mitigation and to ensure the least impact possible, grazing programs will be developed in careful and considered consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittees, lessees, and other designated parties.

Response to JT-8:

Range conservationists were consulted in preparing the DEIS. However, no livestock organizations or "anti-grazing" activist groups were consulted because of potential conflicts of interest. Nevertheless, these organizations were afforded the opportunity to participate at the appropriate times for public involvement in the NEPA process (e.g., during scoping and the public comment periods).

CHAPTER 1

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DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JT-9:

The ranching industry is not being discriminated against, because all riparian and wetland habitats on public land are to be maintained or improved. If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of current grazing practices, a change in management of the livestock would be required. If it is determined that another use (e.g., recreation) is responsible, a change in management of that land use would be required so that the land could achieve its potential.

Because land in most of the BLM riparian areas addressed in the DEIS is used for livestock grazing, a more detailed analysis of the ranching environment and associated activities is included in the DEIS than are other activities such as mining and recreation (including OHVs). The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of BLM public land, and that most of this land is in sustainable condition. The discussion of adverse impacts of grazing on riparian areas was intended to demonstrate the effects of uncontrolled grazing. Most current ranchers graze their livestock in a responsible and scientifically based manner that would not normally be detrimental to the rangeland. However, many riparian areas have not recovered from years of past abuse. Therefore, management actions, such as several or more years of total rest, may be necessary to restore the condition of these areas before controlled livestock use can be allowed.

Response to JT-10:

Thank you for your comments; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to JT-11:

It is the intent of the BLM to improve the health of the land, not to stop livestock grazing on public land or to put anyone out of business. The BLM does not place current public opinion over sound land management, but recognizes that economic, social, and cultural elements are integral components of public land management. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) reflects the BLM's intent to promote harmony among the multiple users (e.g., ranchers) who depend upon the BLM public land and its natural resources.

CHAPTER 1

5031 Onondaga Rd.

Syracuse, New York 13215-1403

2000 JAN 13 AM 10:39

Jan. 7, 2000

070 FARMINGTON, NM
From: Richard W. Weiskopf, M.D. *R. Weiskopf*

To: Pam Herrera, BLM Project Leader, Taos, NM

Jim Silva, Albuquerque Project Leader

Bob Moore, Farmington Project Leader

Bill Merhege, Las Cruces BLM

Re: public comments on alternative draft management plans re
'livestock' grazing along riparian habitats

RWW-1 | I strongly favor the choice which would totally eliminate the
grazing of 'livestock' in riparian areas.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RWW-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

Bob,

J. Petrofsky
Cupertino CA 95015-2413
BJan 00

200 JAN 13 AM 10:38
1070 FARMINGTON, NM
I am writing in response to the Draft EIS for
Riparian & Aquatic Habitat Management. Despite
the fact that most of the riparian areas
are identified as being in a degraded condition,
largely due to cattle grazing, the preferred
alternative will lead to only minimal improvement
in their condition.

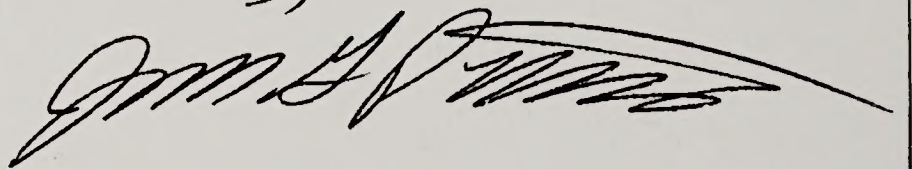
JGP-1

This sounds like another BLM sell-out, coming
in to the interests of a few powerful cattle ranchers
at the expense of the many taxpayers such as
myself.

JGP-2

Please instead select alternative three, which
will protect these environmentally critical areas
by removing all livestock. Thank you.

Sincerely,



DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JGP-1:

The comment reflects an opinion. Thank you for your comment.

Response to JGP-2:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

January 9, 2000

1922 E. Orion Street
Tempe, AZ 85283

2000 JAN 12 AM 11:28
070 FARMINGTON, NM

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore,

I am writing to submit comments on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management.

Researchers have found no ecological benefits whatsoever to livestock grazing in the Southwest's unique and scarce riparian areas (Belsky 1999).

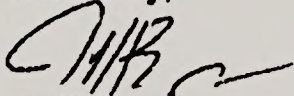
JB-1 Subsequently, your final decision should include provisions to restrict cattle from riparian areas. The best management strategy would be to totally exclude them from the streams altogether.

Positive results have also been achieved by winter use only, whereby the cattle are not allowed in the streams during the warm growing season. This strategy, however, is not as good as total exclusion. It may still result in some overuse of the vegetation. And the cattle may still inflict mechanical damage on the streambanks.

JB-2 Please do not decide to allow summer grazing in riparian areas under the condition that a maximum useage standard will not be exceeded. It may sound good on paper, but there's no practical way to control cattle use in riparian areas during warm weather as the cattle naturally want to congregate there. These types of strategies invariably fail because the only way to enforce the use standard is to move the cattle out of the pasture earlier than scheduled. And this almost never happens in the real world. Besides that, basing acceptable levels of livestock impact solely upon forage useage levels ignores the mechanical damage inflicted on the streambanks by their hooves (Trimble 1995).

Thank you for this opportunity to participate and please keep me updated on the status of this project.

Sincerely,



Jeff Burgess

Ph 602-417-4486 (day)

E-mail: jburgess@neta.com

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JB-1:

The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation.

Response to JB-2:

Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Cited

Belsky, A.J., A. Matzke, and S. Uselman. 1999. Survey of Livestock Influences on Stream and Riparian Ecosystems in the Western United States. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 54(1): 419-431.

Trimble, S.W., and A.C. Mendel. 1995. The Cow as a Geomorphic Agent-A Critical Review. *Geomorphology*. 13:233-253.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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Nolan Thomas Jones, Jr.

341 N Center Street #6 ♦ Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Email: tom@jrat.com

January 9, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

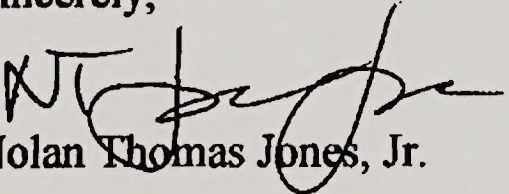
Dear Mr. Moore –

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS regarding
Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management.

NTJ-1

I am in favor of Alternative Three as the only alternative that will promptly remove livestock from sensitive riparian areas and give these places a chance to recover on a timely basis. For many years, the BLM has allowed the livestock grazers to irresponsibly over-graze and otherwise make free use of the range without regard for the environment and other users. Only Alternative Three stops this destruction right away, rather than allowing further degradation. Until ranchers act as responsible citizens, the BLM has no business leasing out public lands to them.

Sincerely,


Nolan Thomas Jones, Jr.

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to NTJ-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

1/9/2000
Counselor, W M

Bob Moore
Bureau of Land Management
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington NM 87401

200 JAN 11 AM 11:23
070 FARMINGTON, NM

Dear Sir:

My comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian & Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office will be limited mostly to 3.2.2 - 3.2.2.7 - the Largo Canyon Area. It will adversely affect myself and my family.

I have resided here for almost 48 years and have seen many changes. Yes, some trees that were across the canyon have been washed away, tho' in other places new ones have come up. There was once a 3" rain above our place, that took out trees, salt cedar etc, it changed the terrain for many years. Even the BLM cannot do anything about the rainfall or lack of it. We have several large canyons which empty into the Largo. Much of the water does come from the Apache Reservation, which I do not believe you can control. I did suggest and offered to cost share rip rap many years ago, but that was not allowed at that time. The ones the oil companies installed did help for quite sometime.

4.1.1.1 I do not believe, as you state, that cattle stay around the springs (which are

MBT-1

MBT-2

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MBT-1:

The BLM recognizes that the land it is responsible for managing is often connected to adjoining lands through functions and/or processes. Management programs worked out with the adjoining landowners are generally more effective and efficient than programs designed to address only public land management. BLM policy is to strive for science-based programs developed through partnering and coordinated planning. Management activities are implemented in careful and considered consultation, cooperation, and coordination with lessees, permittees, and others with a vested interest in the use and/or restoration and maintenance of riparian areas.

Response to MBT-2:

Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The scientific literature shows that cattle are attracted to water sources in dry environments. Obviously, other factors, including forage availability and temperature conditions, also determine how cattle use the landscape.

CHAPTER 1

MBT-2
(cont.)

"on decided hard) as much as you say in the summer months. The flies, and mosquitoes are terrible. Many times you will see animals right in the middle of the canyon to escape the above pests.

MBT-3

4.1.1.2 You blame cattle for much of the erosion. There are many elk on my allotment - they do tend to make trails and even stamp out grass by lakes and springs. The oil companies do not keep their roads maintained - when they do blaze they do not make many cut offs which would help to distribute the water more evenly.

MBT-4

During the summer we have many ORV's - sight seers, treasure hunters etc. In the winter we have hunters and wood haulers, they also leave tracks in many unusual places. I have never seen any BLM personnel policing them.

MBT-5

4.2.1.1 What is considered native plant species? you speak of planting willows. I do not remember ever having many willows in this area, even when I first arrived. I do know that elk and deer are pretty hard on trees.

MBT-6

3.2.2.7 It does seem strange that you rated my allotment as NF. This ranch has been on your management plan since 1970. At that time you said the mesas were fragile and you did not want cattle up there for a long period. The cattle were to put in the Largo because of the water. I did have to pull cattle several years

Response to MBT-3:

Because land in most of the BLM riparian areas addressed in the DEIS is used for livestock grazing, a more detailed analysis of the ranching environment and associated activities than of other activities such as mining and recreation is included in this FEIS. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. The HMP addresses the need to monitor and control problems resulting from these activities.

Response to MBT-4:

The HMP addresses the need to monitor and control problems resulting from these activities.

Response to MBT-5:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. While most of this land is in sustainable condition, many decades of grazing in the West have altered natural plant community structure. Many of these changes occurred over 100 years ago. The willows that would be planted are native species; it may be necessary to protect new seedlings from wildlife grazing or browsing.

Response to MBT-6:

It is the intent of the BLM to improve the health of the land, not to stop livestock grazing on public lands or put anyone out of business. The ranching industry is not being discriminated against; all public lands (including riparian and wetland habitats) are to be improved. If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. If the BLM determines, for example, that the public land is not healthy because of current grazing practices, a change in management of livestock would be required. If it is determined that the public land is not healthy because of another use (e.g., recreation), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

CHAPTER 1

MBT-6
(cont.)

3/ ago and in 1979 I moved 50 head to Tuen.
I did try and comply with your wishes at
much extra expense and heartache.

I had been told for several years that the
brush would be knocked down in the Largo
but that has not occurred. In fact you have
not helped me at all in developing water on
the mesa or anywhere else.

Last month I was told that I probably would
not be able to run cows in Siquito in the
summer either, where water is available. It does
seem strange to me that after all these years
of being on your management plan you seem
to want me out of here very badly. It does
make a person wonder why!

MBT-7

I do believe you are wrong on 3.1.3. We have
many days below 32° in May - even occurring in
June and I have seen many freezes in September.
You should take rainfall more into account,
it does rain in some places more than others, we
can't control that.

Yours Truly
Mary Beth Grady
HCR 80 Box 2
Cuenavaca NM 87018

DEIS WRITTEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MBT-7:

The climate within the area encompassed by the Farmington Field Office is highly variable over time and location. The information presented in the DEIS represents averages and ranges provided by a small number of reporting stations. The BLM acknowledges that these data may not capture all the variable temperature and precipitation that can occur in this region.

-12-00 11:22A

P.02



NEW MEXICO FARM AND LIVESTOCK BUREAU

P. O. Box 20004 • Las Cruces, New Mexico 88004 • (505) 532-4700 • FAX (505) 532-4710

January 10, 2000

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office-New Mexico

Dear Mr. Moore:

On behalf of the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau and it's 15,000 family members we would like to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management.

- JAA-1 | We support Alternative 1, No Action Alternative. To continue managing BLM lands as you have been doing.
- JAA-2 | The preferred alternative (2) falls short of any specific local scientific evidence and does not support your recommendations. The literature you cited is not specific, or up to date to that region or to any of your allotments. Data collected by your agency on your allotments should be included in this EIS. Current NEPA requirements require you to show justification to your preferred alternatives. You have fallen short of this goal.
- JAA-1 | We would encourage you to continue managing the riparian areas in accordance with applicable BLM guidance with the objective of restoring and protecting riparian ecosystems given in Alternative 1.
- JAA-3 | We would question the elimination of livestock grazing in unoccupied flycatcher habitat without proper documentation that they are detrimental to flycatcher survival. How many nesting pairs have been reported in this area?
- JAA-4 | In your reference to the paleontological and cultural resources within riparian habitats in the Farmington Field Office, we would recommend that you follow NEPA policy that specifies that these areas be surveyed and all data on these surveys be included in any EIS.
- JAA-5 | We would also challenge the presumptions that you made in all the socioeconomic sections in this EIS. Especially, in reference to the comment that any Alternative will not have a direct impact on any economics of this area. We would disagree with you and state that an economic hardship on one American Citizen caused by this EIS is one to many. Given that we are in an arid region and water is very limited, any prevention of livestock to riparian areas would indeed effect the permittee in a negative way. You also keep referring to present analysis done in these sections. What present analyses are you referring to? Who did this analysis and where is the data to back your bold statements? We believe that these sections fall short
- JAA-6 |

Response to JAA-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to JAA-2:

Please see Tables 1.1 and 3.2 and Section 3.2 in the DEIS for specific information on each riparian and wetland area, including information on allotment characteristics. In addition, information developed during the ongoing allotment management environmental assessments (EAs), as well as from the regular site surveys and monitoring specified in the Adaptive Management Alternative, will provide continuing feedback on the effectiveness of prescribed riparian management actions.

Response to JAA-3:

By definition, no nesting pairs of southwestern willow flycatchers occur in unoccupied habitat. Under Alternatives 1 and 2 in the DEIS, domestic livestock use of riparian areas is determined after field surveys indicate the condition and management requirements of each riparian area. In the case of southwestern willow flycatchers, the surveys will analyze the current status and potential for recovery of key components of vegetation structure and composition and determine how domestic livestock grazing would affect these parameters.

Response to JAA-4:

Because management actions that disturb soil have not yet been identified for any of the alternatives presented in the DEIS, archeological surveys are not yet required or appropriate. In the event that future management actions that would involve soil disturbance are identified, appropriate cultural clearances would be scheduled.

Response to JAA-5:

The BLM is committed to working with allotment permittees to address the need for adequate water supplies.

Response to JAA-6:

The alternatives presented do not restrict specific economic activity, but rather seek to manage riparian systems to restore and protect riparian habitat on the basis of current legal and regulatory authority. In addition, because specific economic activities are not restricted, but managed to protect sensitive riparian habitats, it is extremely difficult to quantify economic impact in a meaningful way.

CHAPTER 1

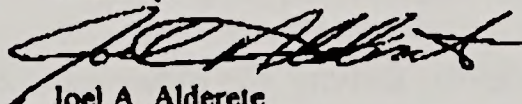
Jan-12-00 11:23A

P.03

- JAA-6 (cont.) | of NEPA compliance and will indeed effect the local economy more than you state and would request a more in-depth analysis of this section.
- JAA-7 | You mention that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where access to riparian areas have been denied. Who will pay for these wells or alternate water sources? Who will maintain these improvements? Could lanes be added to areas that are fenced off so that cattle can reach these riparian areas to water?
- JAA-8 | We would also like to know who will pay and maintain for fencing in areas that it is required?
- JAA-9 | We would also question why elk damage to riparian areas has not been mentioned or any other wildlife damage to these areas. Given the increase in the number of elk, especially in that area, and its increase in competition with livestock over the last few years, we believe it should be covered in this EIS. Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep the recreationist out of these areas?
- JAA-10 | You mention controlling and decreasing saltcedar and Russian olive groves. What has been done up to this time to do this type of management? Given that most treatments would be mechanical and mechanical means would change the environment, how will you mitigate these areas in this EIS? It is our understanding that if you are managing for flycatchers the U.S. Fish and Wildlife has determined that saltcedar stands will be protected for them. How does this conflict with your management strategies?
- JAA-11 | We would show our support for Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative. You stated it yourself, "Although it is clear that livestock grazing can be detrimental to riparian vegetation, current grazing practices enacted after the passage of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 have lessened the adverse impacts significantly." Given this statement we would encourage you to work with the permittee and find a feasible solution to protecting riparian areas. Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative would put to many people out of business, therefore we are opposed to this Alternative.
- JAA-12 | We are concerned with the lack of adequate data in this EIS and its effects to the local culture and communities. We are also concerned that this rush to do this is because of pressure from environmental groups whose sole mission is to eliminate livestock grazing in the Western United States.

We look forward to hearing your response to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Joel A. Alderete
Regional Director
NM Farm and Livestock Bureau

Cc: NM Congressional Delegation
Governor Gary Johnson
Lt. Governor Walter Bradley

Response to JAA-7:

When necessary, the BLM provides alternative livestock watering sources when an existing base water source is fenced to exclude its use. For example, a spring box, pipeline, and water trough system is used to provide a water source away from the fenced spring area. If alternative watering sources cannot be developed, water gaps may be created to allow livestock limited access to the stream.

Response to JAA-8:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to JAA-9:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting, elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to JAA-10:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the biological evaluation (BE) presented in Appendix B of this FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the biological opinion (BO) issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 1997).

Response to JAA-11:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JAA-12:

It is the intent of the BLM to improve the health of the land, not to stop livestock grazing on public lands or put anyone out of business. The BLM has conducted an open public process in the preparation of the DEIS and the FEIS that meets or exceeds all NEPA requirements. The BLM has not committed to a management strategy or alternative for the HMP on the basis of the requests of one or a few organizations or members of the public.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

10 JAN 27 PM 1:54

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DEIS FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT
MANAGEMENT IN THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As President, I have prepared these comments on behalf of the Sandia Jeep Club (SJC), a Santa Fe area-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles. SJC's members make extensive recreational use of lands administered by your office and are concerned about the direction the preferred alternative is taking.

SCD-1

In reviewing your DEIS, I have found your proposed approach to managing riparian and aquatic habitats to be unacceptable and irresponsible. I regret having come to this conclusion because SJC members have worked with BLM staff to promote balanced, multi-purpose use of our public lands for many years and have found those staff members to be both knowledgeable and responsible people. My conclusions stem not only from my concern for preserving primitive roaded recreational opportunities on public lands but also from my concern that public lands should continue to be managed in a manner that considers all needs. For these reasons, the Sandia Jeep Club supports the balanced approach to riparian and aquatic habitat management provided by your current program, which has been identified, inappropriately, as the "no-action alternative."

The specific reasons for my conclusions are summarized as follows.

SCD-2

Single-Minded Purpose of Preferred Alternative 2 Ignores Common Sense and Good Management Practice. As stated on p. 2-8 of the DEIS, "... the Adaptive Management Alternative seeks first to do what is necessary to ensure the restoration and protection of riparian areas and then to permit those other uses to the extent that they are compatible with the protection and restoration of riparian resources." The preferred alternative subrogates *all* other uses to the preservation and restoration of riparian resources. This is blind, unbalanced management, in fact, it is not management at all. Although riparian habitat is certainly important, circumstances will arise where the need to preserve riparian resources must be weighed against other important and legitimate needs such as prehistoric and historic resource preservation, recreation and facility development, and public access. It is not good management practice to bind your hands with a policy that keeps you from weighing the multitude of needs on their own merits and coming to management decisions that make sense. Riparian resource preservation

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SCD-1:

Thank you for your comment. The No Action Alternative is presented as Alternative 1, Current Management, in the DEIS and represents the continuation of current management plans aimed at a balanced multiple use of public land.

Response to SCD-2:

Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, does not exclude other management activities in riparian areas. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.

CHAPTER 1

SCD-2 | will not always be the best and highest management objective at all riparian locations.
(cont.) | Alternative 2 does **not** make good management sense and should be rejected.

SCD-3 | **Alternative 3 Grazing Management also Ignores Good Management Practice and Common Sense.** As stated on p. 2-11 of the DEIS, "Under the Grazing Management Alternative, the Farmington Field Office would eliminate grazing by domestic livestock in riparian areas ..." The blanket elimination of grazing, or any other legitimate use of public lands, without consideration of site-specific conditions and mitigation measures is also blind, unbalanced management. Again, it is not good management practice nor the best and highest use of public lands to adopt a policy that constrains the BLM from making decisions based on the merits of each situation. It is entirely possible that grazing would be compatible with riparian protection in many areas, as illustrated in my next comment. Alternative 3 does not make good management sense and should also be **rejected**.

SCD-4 | **Other Uses are Compatible with Good Riparian Management.** Table 1.1 of the DEIS provides a summary of Farmington Field Office riparian areas, their current use, and their known condition. Returning riparian areas to the PFC (Proper Functioning Condition) state is indicated in the DEIS as the ultimate objective of BLM's management plans. Of the 16 riparian areas listed in the table stated to currently be in the desired proper functioning condition, five are either currently grazed or trespass grazed. Having nearly one-third of the properly functioning wetlands currently experiencing grazing strongly indicates that good riparian management and grazing are not incompatible if properly managed. Although only grazing use was mentioned in the table, in the area administered by the Taos Field Office two out of the four properly functioning riparian areas were identified as also having OHV use. Again, this data indicates that good riparian management and OHV use are not incompatible if properly managed. It is clear that other uses such as grazing, OHV, hiking, and fishing can be compatible with a properly functioning riparian area and should not be automatically excluded. Options such as Alternative 3 that automatically brand a certain use as incompatible should not even be considered. In fact, Table 1.1 provides good evidence that Alternative 3, or any other alternative that promotes a blanket ban on a particular activity, is completely inappropriate. The BLM is self-identified as a *management* agency. There are many legitimate uses of public lands and the first management reaction to a problem should be to seek mitigation, not closure.

SCD-5 | **Allocation of Funding as First Priority.** By assigning the Farmington Field Office's highest priority as protecting and restoring riparian areas as indicated on p. 2-7 under the preferred alternative, it follows that other legitimate needs and uses of public lands managed by your office would suffer from a significant lack of funding while riparian management was vigorously pursued. This is not a good management policy because many of your other important programs, such as biodiversity enhancement and T&E species protection in non-riparian areas, would unduly suffer. It should be clear that there are many important issues that need attention on public lands administered by the BLM, not just riparian habitat protection. It is suggested on p. S-1 in your summary statements that part of the legal objection to your current riparian management approach was that

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SCD-3:

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 3, Grazing Management, addresses public input and issue identification received by the BLM during the scoping process.

Response to SCD-4:

Except for Alternative 3, Grazing Management, current or future allowed activities or actions (e.g., recreation or grazing) will be based on the site-specific requirements or management needs of individual riparian areas.

Response to SCD-5:

Developing budget priorities has and will continue to be a challenge for public and private organizations. The BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

CHAPTER 1

SCD-5
(cont.)


you have been proceeding too slowly due to a lack of funding. I submit that if riparian protection on public lands was of overriding interest compared to all other uses for a majority of the American people, the funding needed to provide that protection would have been there for you. The fact that it was not indicates that the criticality you attribute to riparian protection in preferred Alternative 2 does not reflect the opinion of the majority of Americans but only of the relatively small special interest group that filed the lawsuit. The best use of your limited funds is to continue with what you should be doing: provide balanced support for all legitimate uses of the lands you manage.

SCD-6

Not a Good Precedent to Set in Responding to a Lawsuit. It is clear that riparian area protection is receiving the current high level of attention in response to special interest litigation. Your reaction has been to satisfy that legal challenge by making riparian area protection superior to all other needs for management of public lands. Suppose the Navajo Nation filed a lawsuit contending that your protection of their ancestral sites was not being pursued with sufficient vigor. Would you then turn around and make protection of prehistoric and historic resources your number one priority? You are not setting a good precedent in responding to the riparian habitat lawsuit in the manner proposed in the DEIS. As a citizen, I believe that adopting Alternative 2 would be a serious overreaction to the riparian protection lawsuit and a terrible precedent to set in responding to future lawsuits.

In summary, I urge you to reconsider your priorities and maintain the balanced management posture you have held for so many years by adopting Alternative 1. As always, the Sandia Jeep Club looks forward to working with your office in the future.

Sincerely,



Sam C de Baca, President
Sandia Jeep Club
PO Box 29444
Santa Fe, NM 87592-9444

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SCD-6:

Thank you for your comment; your opposition to Alternative 2 is noted. The BLM has been emphasizing riparian habitat protection and improvement for over 10 years. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation management.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE TAOS FIELD
OFFICE

TCD-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the Sandia Jeep Club, a Santa Fe-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles, I am deeply concerned about the management direction this document promotes. I do not believe that the BLM should place riparian habitat protection above all other needs when managing our public lands. The BLM should instead manage the land to best meet the needs of all users, emphasizing balanced multiple use objectives as it has in the past. Where uses conflict, an effort should first be made to seek effective mitigating measures rather than to summarily exclude one use in favor of another or identify one use as universally more important than another.

TCD-2

I support your current program, expressed as Alternative 1, because it provides a more balanced approach to resolving management issues. Alternative 2 places riparian habitat protection above all other uses, which is wrong. Alternative 3 would summarily exclude all cattle grazing in riparian areas, which is also wrong because it provides no allowance for mitigating measures and site-specific conditions.

I strongly urge you to abandon Alternative 2 and adopt Alternative 1 as your preferred approach to protecting riparian areas.

Sincerely,

*Teresa CdeBaca
13 Ya Calle An-
La Cienega 87505*

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TCD-1:

Citizen desires for the use of public lands are as diverse as the terrain that the BLM manages. While some want unrestricted use, others demand absolute protection. The BLM's responsibility is to listen to the diverse voices of the public and to provide the best possible balance in natural resource management, while following all public land laws. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management) is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to TCD-2:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 07:45:01 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: James Clark
Address: 3112 Camino De La Sierra
City: Albuquerque
State: NM
Zip: 87111
Phone: N/A
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

JC-1

The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive "little improvement" by the preferred alternative. I urge you to choose an alternative that will lead to the improvement of riparian habitats, which are crucial to the health of biodiversity in this region.

Many studies have shown a strong correlation between cattle grazing and the degradation of these sensitive riparian areas. It is time that we remove cattle from these areas, so that they can recover and provide healthy habitat for native species; not the domesticated bovine. The cumulative damage caused by cattle in our riparian ecosystems has taken a toll on the integrity of these ecosystems, while providing little or no benefit to the larger public (the 99% of the non-ranching public) to whom these lands also belong. As a member of this larger public, I want to see native species thriving in these ecosystems, not exotic, destructive cattle.

Please select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from

all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery to the life-lines of New Mexico; our streams and rivers.

Remote_Addr: 205.188.195.41
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; AOL 4.0; Windows 98)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JC-1:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land, most of which is in sustainable condition. The riparian and aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 12:26:37 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Elaine Cohen
Address: PO Box 2374
City: Mesilla Park
State: NM
Zip: 88047
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas appears to be cattle grazing. Please keep in mind that the BLM needs to manage the land, not just for ranching use, but also for recreational use and for maintaining diverse wildlife to maintain the overall, long-term health of the land, air, water, and other natural resources. To make any improvement in the riparian and aquatic habitats, it appears that alternative three, which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery, would be the best choice. A reasonable discussion with ranchers to help them make the change from their current practices to ones that will help habitats rather than degrade them, should follow, with the possibility of reintroducing livestock in a more environmentally conscious way.

EC-1

Remote_Addr: 128.123.100.20
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/1.22 (compatible; MSIE 2.0d; Windows NT)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to EC-1:

It is the intent of the BLM to improve the health of the land, not to stop livestock grazing on public lands or to put anyone out of business.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 01:16:01 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Jim Dawson
Address: 880 Division St. NW
City: Olympia
State: WA
Zip: 98502
Phone: 360-705-9812

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery. This is the very least the Federal Government can do. I firmly believe all commercial grazing, logging, mining, and other destructive activities need to be ended immediately on all Federal public lands. While I understand the importance of many of these resources to our nation. The misuse and abuse that has occurred in the past century warrants an end to all of these destructive policies. The stability of our economy and way of life depend on it.

JD-1

JD-2

Remote_Addr: 216.174.207.201
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.7 [en] (Win95; I)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JD-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to JD-2:

The comment is nonspecific; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 02:47:41 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Name: Stefan fuegi
Address: PO Box 71
City: Gila
State: NM
Zip: 88038
Phone: 505.535.2280

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

SF-1

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

SF-2

I own a farm in Gila, NM and spent a lot of time on public lands in Southwest NM. So I see the damage and degradation caused by cattle firsthand. My farm does not take government subsidies. We operate on our own. It's time for NM ranchers to do the same, and it's time to get the cows off our rivers and streams. If they own the land they graze, fine. But I don't want their cows on public lands at taxpayer expense any more. Thank you.

Remote_Addr: 12.28.65.208
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.7 (Macintosh; U; PPC)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SF-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to SF-2:

The comment is nonspecific; thank you for your support.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 01:51:07 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: warren harkey
Address: 3201 Bowman
City: Las Cruces
State: NM
Zip: 88005
Phone: 505-523-0562

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

WH-1

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop.

Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from

all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

The southwestern part of the state has been literally raped by cattle grazing

WH-2

over the last century. Every natural spring in this part of the state, and I have been to most of them on BLM and US forest land, has been literally covered with cow manure for as long as I can remember.

Warren Harkey

Remote_Addr: 216.234.196.12
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.7 [en] (WinNT; I)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WH-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to WH-2:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

2000 JAN 13 AM 10:23

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE TAOS FIELD
OFFICE

TH-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the Sandia Jeep Club, a Santa Fe-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles, I am deeply concerned about the management direction this document promotes. I do not believe that the BLM should place riparian habitat protection above all other needs when managing our public lands. The BLM should instead manage the land to best meet the needs of all users, emphasizing balanced multiple use objectives as it has in the past. Where uses conflict, an effort should first be made to seek effective mitigating measures rather than to summarily exclude one use in favor of another or identify one use as universally more important than another.

TH-2

I support your current program, expressed as Alternative 1, because it provides a more balanced approach to resolving management issues. Alternative 2 places riparian habitat protection above all other uses, which is wrong. Alternative 3 would summarily exclude all cattle grazing in riparian areas, which is also wrong because it provides no allowance for mitigating measures and site-specific conditions.

I strongly urge you to abandon Alternative 2 and adopt Alternative 1 as your preferred approach to protecting riparian areas.

Sincerely,

TIM HODGKINS
ROUTE 5, BOX 261-C
SANTA FE, NM
87501

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TH-1:

Citizen desires for the use of public lands are as diverse as the terrain that the BLM manages. While some want unrestricted use, others demand absolute protection. The BLM's responsibility is to listen to the diverse voices of the public and to provide the best possible balance in natural resource management, while following all public land laws. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management) is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to TH-2:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

2000 JAN 13 AM 10:41

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE TAOS FIELD
OFFICE

SH-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the Sandia Jeep Club, a Santa Fe-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles, I am deeply concerned about the management direction this document promotes. I do not believe that the BLM should place riparian habitat protection above all other needs when managing our public lands. The BLM should instead manage the land to best meet the needs of all users, emphasizing balanced multiple use objectives as it has in the past. Where uses conflict, an effort should first be made to seek effective mitigating measures rather than to summarily exclude one use in favor of another or identify one use as universally more important than another.

SH-2

I support your current program, expressed as Alternative 1, because it provides a more balanced approach to resolving management issues. Alternative 2 places riparian habitat protection above all other uses, which is wrong. Alternative 3 would summarily exclude all cattle grazing in riparian areas, which is also wrong because it provides no allowance for mitigating measures and site-specific conditions.

I strongly urge you to abandon Alternative 2 and adopt Alternative 1 as your preferred approach to protecting riparian areas.

Sincerely,

Steve Hunt

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SH-1:

Citizen desires for the use of public lands are as diverse as the terrain that the BLM manages. While some want unrestricted use, others demand absolute protection. The BLM's responsibility is to listen to the diverse voices of the public and to provide the best possible balance in natural resource management, while following all public land laws. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management) is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to SH-2:

Thank you for your comment; your support of Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

2000 JAN 13 PM 2:42

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE TAOS FIELD
OFFICE

RLS-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the Sandia Jeep Club, a Santa Fe-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles, I am deeply concerned about the management direction this document promotes. I do not believe that the BLM should place riparian habitat protection above all other needs when managing our public lands. The BLM should instead manage the land to best meet the needs of all users, emphasizing balanced multiple use objectives as it has in the past. Where uses conflict, an effort should first be made to seek effective mitigating measures rather than to summarily exclude one use in favor of another or identify one use as universally more important than another.

RLS-2

I support your current program, expressed as Alternative 1, because it provides a more balanced approach to resolving management issues. Alternative 2 places riparian habitat protection above all other uses, which is wrong. Alternative 3 would summarily exclude all cattle grazing in riparian areas, which is also wrong because it provides no allowance for mitigating measures and site-specific conditions.

I strongly urge you to abandon Alternative 2 and adopt Alternative 1 as your preferred approach to protecting riparian areas.

Sincerely,

Ron & Susan Low

*23 - 2035 Calle Lorca
Santa Fe NM 87505*

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RSL-1:

Citizen desires for the use of public lands are as diverse as the terrain that the BLM manages. While some want unrestricted use, others demand absolute protection. The BLM's responsibility is to listen to the diverse voices of the public and to provide the best possible balance in natural resource management, while following all public land laws. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management) is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to RSL-2:

Thank you for your comment, your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 12:24:07 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Name: Brad Meiklejohn
Address: 9850 Hiland Road
City: Eagle River
State: AK
Zip: 99577
Phone: 907-696-3472
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments:

Dear BLM:

I urge you to select the Third Alternative to remove livestock grazing from riparian areas. I have hiked many of the draws and creeks under your management, and have seen the degradation of vegetation and water quality caused by cows grazing in these areas. Cattle grazing in and around creeks and streambeds is inappropriate in the arid Southwest, and should be completely eliminated.

BM-1

Please completely remove cows from riparian areas in your area of management.

Sincerely,

Brad Meiklejohn

Remote_Addr: 216.192.13.76
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.03; Windows 3.1)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BM-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

Robert Moore, Project Leader
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

2000 JAN 11 AM 11:26

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Reference: Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management

Dear Mr. Moore:

First may I comment that the draft EIS was thoroughly researched and made every attempt to deal impartially with the many problems associated with riparian habitat. I further appreciate being allowed to voice my feelings. Having said that I would like to make several comments on the EIS and its recommendations.

FN-1

It would appear to this observer that adoption of Alternative 3 which is the Grazing Management Alternative would be the best of the three alternatives. First, only 0.02% of all grazing land in the Farmington Field Office would be adversely affected by this adoption. This amounts to a miniscule number of AUM's that would have to be eliminated or reduced, approximately 2 in every ten thousand cattle currently grazing in this area. I understand that riparian areas represent premium habitat for forage, so the resultant effect would be greater, but an action of this sort would certainly represent a fraction of acreage currently grazed.

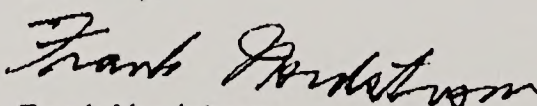
FN-2

Secondly, although the BLM must, according to its own mission statement "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations" – the underlining was my own – it should be evident that past management practices have often resulted in land with less than properly functioning condition. And this is particularly important as it regards riparian areas, the most sensitive of all areas administered by the BLM.

So although I am concerned about the current condition of BLM land, I am further worried about the future of that land. I am quite aware that although both the writer (and possibly even the reader) of this letter will be deceased in a hundred years, the land will remain, and I hope it will at that time be described as being in properly functioning condition by our descendents. That would be a nice situation to bequeath them.

Thank you again for allowing me to contribute my impressions toward the riparian and aquatic management of lands administered by the Farmington Field Office.

Sincerely,



Frank Nordstrom
5455 Hood Mesa Trail
Farmington, NM 87401

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to FN-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to FN-2:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 01:34:27 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Daniel Patterson
Address: POB 172
City: Tucson
State: AZ
Zip: 85702
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

DP-1

land
at the
offering
ecosystems
There is no sensible economic or ecological argument for continued livestock grazing of riparian areas or sensitive arid uplands. Americans want this protected, not handed out to special ranching interests for private profit cost of our natural heritage. Why does BLM choose a preferred alternative only minimal recovery when BLM has full authority and mandate to protect and species by removing cattle from degraded and sensitive habitats? Please explain.

DP-2

Daniel Patterson
Desert Ecologist
former BLM Natural Resources Specialist, California Desert District

Remote_Addr: 204.27.149.194
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.51 [en] (Win98; U)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to DP-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to DP-2:

See previous response.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN THE TAOS FIELD
OFFICE

RR-1

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a member of the Sandia Jeep Club, a Santa Fe-based organization promoting the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles, I am deeply concerned about the management direction this document promotes. I do not believe that the BLM should place riparian habitat protection above all other needs when managing our public lands. The BLM should instead manage the land to best meet the needs of all users, emphasizing balanced multiple use objectives as it has in the past. Where uses conflict, an effort should first be made to seek effective mitigating measures rather than to summarily exclude one use in favor of another or identify one use as universally more important than another.

RR-2

I support your current program, expressed as Alternative 1, because it provides a more balanced approach to resolving management issues. Alternative 2 places riparian habitat protection above all other uses, which is wrong. Alternative 3 would summarily exclude all cattle grazing in riparian areas, which is also wrong because it provides no allowance for mitigating measures and site-specific conditions.

I strongly urge you to abandon Alternative 2 and adopt Alternative 1 as your preferred approach to protecting riparian areas.

Sincerely,

Ruben Rangel
2615 Calle Primavera
Santa Fe, NM 87505

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RR-1:

Citizen desires for the use of public lands are as diverse as the terrain that the BLM manages. While some want unrestricted use, others demand absolute protection. The BLM's responsibility is to listen to the diverse voices of the public and to provide the best possible balance in natural resource management, while following all public land laws. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management) is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to RR-2:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

January 10

Bob Moore
Project Leader, BLM
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

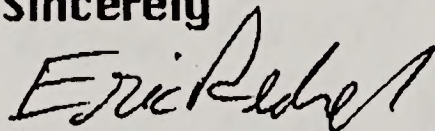
2000 JAN 13 AM 10:20
070 FARMINGTON, NM

Dear Bob Moore

ER-1

I understand the BLM is now considering new management alternatives. The land under which this new alternatives impact include over 15,000 acres of riparian and aquatic habitat which is a scarce ecosystem in New Mexico. In the past grazing management in these areas gave little or no concern to the condition of habitats. Now we realize their importance in maintaining a balanced healthy environment. It is now time to start programs that directly address the recovery of riparian and aquatic habitats. It is now time to start on a new path of public land management. The adverse impacts of grazing must be acknowledged. Even in your own DEIS you admit the degraded condition of these ecosystems and you know the cause, it is over grazing. In the past you assumed that grazing cattle is the only use of the land. You assumed there were no other benefits. Now we know this is not true. Such a philosophy is a very narrow, selfish, and closed minded. Your preferred alternative does nothing to address the recovery of riparian and aquatic habitat. I want you to select alternative 3 as the most beneficial alternative in regards to riparian and aquatic habitat. I do not want my public lands degraded any more by the cattle industry. As of now these riparian and aquatic lands have only one use and that is to water cattle. I thought you were suppose to manage for multiple use. I want you to select alternative 3.

Sincerely



Eric Rechel
2890 Seely Rd
Grand Junction CO 81503

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to ER-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

January 10, 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

2000 JAN 12 PM 1:27

070 FARMINGTON, N.M.

Attention: Bob Moore, Project Leader

Re: COMMENTS ON DEIS FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT
MANAGEMENT IN THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As Director of Environmental Affairs, I have prepared these comments on behalf of the SouthWest Four Wheel Drive Association, a regional organization comprising 1500 member families in 35 member clubs who promote the responsible use of four-wheel drive vehicles. SWFWDA members make extensive recreational use of lands administered by your office and are concerned about the direction the preferred alternative is taking.

TR-1

In reviewing your DEIS, I have found your proposed approach to managing riparian and aquatic habitats to be unacceptable and irresponsible. I regret having come to this conclusion because SWFWDA members have worked with BLM staff to promote balanced, multi-purpose use of our public lands for many years and have found those staff members to be both knowledgeable and responsible people. My conclusions stem not only from my concern for preserving primitive roaded recreational opportunities on public lands but also from my concern that public lands should continue to be managed in a manner that considers all needs. For these reasons, the SWFWDA supports the balanced approach to riparian and aquatic habitat management provided by your current program, which has been identified, inappropriately, as the "no-action alternative."

The specific reasons for my conclusions are summarized as follows.

STR-2

Single-Minded Purpose of Preferred Alternative 2 Ignores Common Sense and Good Management Practice. As stated on p. 2-8 of the DEIS, "... the Adaptive Management Alternative seeks first to do what is necessary to ensure the restoration and protection of riparian areas and then to permit those other uses to the extent that they are compatible with the protection and restoration of riparian resources." The preferred alternative subrogates *all* other uses to the preservation and restoration of riparian resources. This is blind, unbalanced management, in fact, it is not management at all. Although riparian habitat is certainly important, circumstances will arise where the need to preserve riparian resources must be weighed against other important and legitimate needs such as prehistoric and historic resource preservation, recreation and facility development, and public access. It is not good management practice to bind your hands with a policy that keeps you from weighing the multitude of needs on their own merits and coming to management decisions that make sense. Riparian resource preservation

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TR-1:

Thank you for your comment. The No Action Alternative is presented as Alternative 1, Current Management, in the DEIS and represents the continuation of current management plans aimed at a balanced multiple use of public land.

Response to TR-2:

Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, does not exclude other management activities in riparian areas. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.

CHAPTER 1

TR-2 | will not always be the best and highest management objective at all riparian locations.
(cont.) | Alternative 2 does **not** make good management sense and should be rejected.

TR-3 | **Alternative 3 Grazing Management also Ignores Good Management Practice and Common Sense.** As stated on p. 2-11 of the DEIS, "Under the Grazing Management Alternative, the Farmington Field Office would eliminate grazing by domestic livestock in riparian areas ..." The blanket elimination of grazing, or any other legitimate use of public lands, without consideration of site-specific conditions and mitigation measures is also blind, unbalanced management. Again, it is not good management practice nor the best and highest use of public lands to adopt a policy that constrains the BLM from making decisions based on the merits of each situation. It is entirely possible that grazing would be compatible with riparian protection in many areas, as illustrated in my next comment. Alternative 3 does not make good management sense and should also be rejected.

TR-4 | **Other Uses are Compatible with Good Riparian Management.** Table 1.1 of the DEIS provides a summary of Farmington Field Office riparian areas, their current use, and their known condition. Returning riparian areas to the PFC (Proper Functioning Condition) state is indicated in the DEIS as the ultimate objective of BLM's management plans. Of the 16 riparian areas listed in the table stated to currently be in the desired proper functioning condition, five are either currently grazed or trespass grazed. Having nearly one-third of the properly functioning wetlands currently experiencing grazing strongly indicates that good riparian management and grazing are not incompatible if properly managed. Although only grazing use was mentioned in the table, in the area administered by the Taos Field Office two out of the four properly functioning riparian areas were identified as also having OHV use. Again, this data indicates that good riparian management and OHV use are not incompatible if properly managed. It is clear that other uses such as grazing, OHV, hiking, and fishing can be compatible with a properly functioning riparian area and should not be automatically excluded. Options such as Alternative 3 that automatically brand a certain use as incompatible should not even be considered. In fact, Table 1.1 provides good evidence that Alternative 3, or any other alternative that promotes a blanket ban on a particular activity, is completely inappropriate. The BLM is self-identified as a *management* agency. There are many legitimate uses of public lands and the first management reaction to a problem should be to seek mitigation, not closure.

TR-5 | **Allocation of Funding as First Priority.** By assigning the Farmington Field Office's highest priority as protecting and restoring riparian areas as indicated on p. 2-7 under the preferred alternative, it follows that other legitimate needs and uses of public lands managed by your office would suffer from a significant lack of funding while riparian management was vigorously pursued. This is not a good management policy because many of your other important programs, such as biodiversity enhancement and T&E species protection in non-riparian areas, would unduly suffer. It should be clear that there are many important issues that need attention on public lands administered by the BLM, not just riparian habitat protection. It is suggested on p. S-1 in your summary statements that part of the legal objection to your current riparian management approach was that

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TR-3:

Thank you for your comment. Alternative 3, Grazing Management, addresses public input and issue identification received by the BLM during the scoping process.

Response to TR-4:

Except for Alternative 3, Grazing Management, current or future allowed activities or actions (e.g., recreation or grazing) will be based on the site-specific requirements or management needs of individual riparian areas.

Response to TR-5:

Developing budget priorities has and will continue to be a challenge for public and private organizations. The BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

CHAPTER 1

TR-5
(cont.)

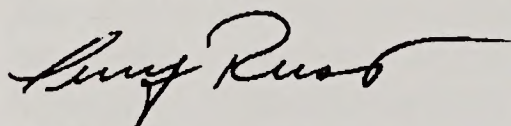
you have been proceeding too slowly due to a lack of funding. I submit that if riparian protection on public lands was of overriding interest compared to all other uses for a majority of the American people, the funding needed to provide that protection would have been there for you. The fact that it was not indicates that the criticality you attribute to riparian protection in preferred Alternative 2 does not reflect the opinion of the majority of Americans but only of the relatively small special interest group that filed the lawsuit. The best use of your limited funds is to continue with what you should be doing: provide balanced support for all legitimate uses of the lands you manage.

TR-6

Not a Good Precedent to Set in Responding to a Lawsuit. It is clear that riparian area protection is receiving the current high level of attention in response to special interest litigation. Your reaction has been to satisfy that legal challenge by making riparian area protection superior to all other needs for management of public lands. Suppose the Navajo Nation filed a lawsuit contending that your protection of their ancestral sites was not being pursued with sufficient vigor. Would you then turn around and make protection of prehistoric and historic resources your number one priority? You are not setting a good precedent in responding to the riparian habitat lawsuit in the manner proposed in the DEIS. As a citizen, I believe that adopting Alternative 2 would be a serious overreaction to the riparian protection lawsuit and a terrible precedent to set in responding to future lawsuits.

In summary, I urge you to reconsider your priorities and maintain the balanced management posture you have held for so many years by adopting Alternative 1. As always, the SWFWDA looks forward to working with your office in the future.

Sincerely,



Terry Rust
Director of Environmental Affairs – SWFWDA
118 Beryl
Los Alamos, NM 87544

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TR-6:

Thank you for your comment; your opposition to Alternative 2 is noted. The BLM has been emphasizing riparian habitat protection and improvement for over 10 years. Alternative 2 identifies the improvement and protection of riparian habitat and associated threatened and endangered species habitat as primary objectives. These primary objectives do not exclude secondary objectives such as recreation or cultural resource management.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 01:57:35 PM

To: gls@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Kristen Sykes
Address: 1532 Monroe St, NW
City: Washington
State: DC
Zip: 20010
Phone: (202) 462-6119

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

KS-1

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

KS-2

I would also like to see strong protection for the Northern Goshawk which has been imperiled for quite some time, as well as protection for old growth forests and habitat!

Thanks for your consideration and for choosing the right alternative for the environment and ecosystem protection, alternative 3.

Sincerely,

Kristen Sykes

Remote_Addr: 165.247.97.225
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.5 [en]C-CCK-MCD (Win98; I)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to KS-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to KS-2:

The BLM agrees that old-growth forests need to be protected. However, these forest habitats do not coincide with the riparian areas addressed in the FEIS. Thus, the Riparian and Aquatic HMP does not address old-growth forests. Similarly, the northern goshawk's preferred habitat (i.e., large expanses of mature coniferous forests) does not coincide with the specified riparian areas addressed in the FEIS. Therefore, riparian and aquatic habitat management would not affect the northern goshawk.

CHAPTER 1

2000 JAN 11 AM 11:22

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington, NM 87401

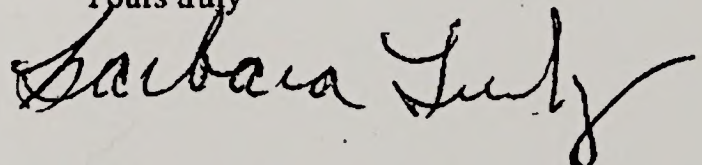
070 FARMINGTON, NM

January 10, 2000

Dear Mr. Moore

- BT-1 Could you please explain how you can use the same definition of riparian area for a stream, river and lake shore tract as you do for an ephemeral wash? It seems that any where you saw a saltceder in a dry wash bed you called it a riparian area and gave it a NF rating expecting it to look like a river tract with cottonwoods and willows, with no regard to the fact that there probably is not enough ground water to support any more growth than what is already there. You also make no reference to the width or the slope of these washes.
- BT-2 Also through out this book you make statements about the detrimental effects of grazing, citing studies done by and for the environmental extremists. This can especially be seen on page 5-2 Agencies and organizations consulted NMSU being the only non-bias group consulted. On page 4-3 you cite an Oregon study done on a stream side, saying cattle are attracted to streams (moving water) but in the ephemeral tracts the springs and sumps (non moving water) are just breeding grounds for mosquitoes and biting flies which cattle are not attracted to.
- BT-3 Also under climate (3.1.3 page 3-3,4) maybe parts of the Farmington district are frost free from May to Sept. but that is not true in all of it. I nor my relatives (which have been living in the Largo Canyon for 100 years) have not seen any frost free Mays or Septembers. Also 15 miles per hour for a top wind speed is ridiculously low.
- BT-4 On page 4-9 under 4.1.1.5 Natural Resources Development nothing is mentioned of the millions of gallons of water used when drilling an oil or gas well. Most of this water is pulled from sumps, which is fed from the ground water that the riparian vegetation is dependant upon. In chapter 4 when discussing socioeconomics words like small contribution, negligible impact and minimal impact are used frequently,
- BT-5 but what if you were faced with less office space and a cut in wages. This is what the ranchers are facing fewer cattle (wages) on less land (space) and it does not seem small, negligible or minimal.
- BT-6 This EIS makes a lot of proposals and assumptions considering you state on page 1-1 that more scientific data needs to be obtained and utilized. The errors and misinformation given in this book are enormous. I do not feel that grazing should be eliminated until more studies can be done

Yours truly



Barbara Truby
HCR 80 Box 2
Counselor, NM 87018

Response to BT-1:

The introductory material that begins the discussion of the riparian and wetland areas (DEIS Section 3.2) provides a more thorough description of riparian areas. The subsections within Section 3.2 provide information on each riparian area, including discussions of the major riparian vegetation present. The BLM acknowledges that some riparian areas are nonfunctional (NF) because of the natural conditions that occur at the site (e.g., inadequate hydrological conditions). Such areas would not receive management priority by the BLM for riparian enhancements.

Response to BT-2:

This comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

Response to BT-3:

See the response to B. Truby No. 3 (Table 1.1).

Response to BT-4:

Impacts to hydrological resources associated with oil and gas well drilling were addressed in the *Albuquerque District Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendment Final Environmental Impact Statement Oil & Gas Leasing and Development* (BLM 1991). That management plan (and any related documentation published since then) would cover drilling effects on riparian areas. The riparian and wetland areas that are the subject of the FEIS are not significantly impacted by oil and gas production.

Response to BT-5:

The BLM does not anticipate having to reduce the AUMs on any allotment associated with riparian and aquatic habitat management activities. Any required fencing or supplemental watering sources would be funded by the BLM, unless prior agreements stipulate other funding arrangements. During the period of management to improve the condition of a riparian area, the permittee may need to incur the costs associated with supplying supplemental forage (e.g., lease private pastures, improve the public land). The ranchers and other users that may be most affected by riparian management will be those currently conducting activities or practices that are not in concert with achieving PFC. The permittees that could be most affected by establishment of riparian pastures/exclosures would be those with small one-pasture allotments. The BLM agrees that if a rancher goes out of business, he/she is not going to enjoy the prosperity of the long-term improvements in habitat management. To provide mitigation and to ensure the least impact possible, grazing programs will be developed in careful and considered consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittees, lessees, and other designated parties.

CHAPTER 1

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BT-6:

Thank you for your comment; your support for the continuation of grazing in riparian areas is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/10/2000 02:18:18 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Christina Wulf
Address: 344 / #2 Pine Ave.
City: Waynesboro
State: VA
Zip: 22980
Phone: 540-942-1887

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

CW-1 | Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and
aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition
and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The
main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our
precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of
ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. America's public lands belong to all
citizens,
not to a relatively few ranchers, loggers, miners, etc. whose private
profits interest
has, for the past century, been given precedence over the ecological
benefits
provided by intact ecosystems to all humans. As a nation, our values have
changed and it is time to get private corporate interests off public lands.
CW-2 | That
means an end to commercial extraction of all kinds -- from cows to chainsaws
to mining drills.
CW-3 | Please select alternative three which will result in the removal of
livestock from
all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.
Sincerely,
Christina Wulf

Remote_Addr: 216.174.7.12
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.04 [en] (Win95; I)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CW-1:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the public land. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment.

Response to CW-2:

The BLM recognizes that economic, social, and cultural elements are integral components of public land management. The HMP reflects the BLM's intent to promote harmony among the multiple users who depend on the BLM land and its natural resources.

Response to CW-3:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 09:01:44 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Paul Austgen
Address: 150 Fox Hill Lane
City: Colorado Springs
State: CO
Zip: 80919
Phone: 719 598 4691
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

PA-1 | Select alternative one which will hopefully provide multi-use.

Remote_Addr: 156.153.255.114
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.7 [en] (WinNT; U)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to PA-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

Jimmy R. Bason
St. Rt. 2, Box 88
Hillsboro, NM 88042

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

001-11-11
2000 JAN 14 21:15

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

JB-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.

JB-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.

JB-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "... riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

JB-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

JB-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?

JB-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

Response to JB-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to JB-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to JB-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to JB-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of Volume 1 of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS.

Response to JB-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to JB-6:

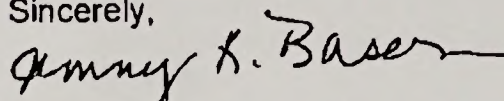
The Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

CHAPTER 1

- JB-7 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
- JB-8 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action?
- JB-9 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep?
- JB-10 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous.
- JB-11 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. I do not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. Today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques.
- JB-12 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas?
- JB-13 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas?
- JB-14 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Jimmy Bason

Response to JB-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to JB-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to JB-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to JB-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to JB-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to JB-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to JB-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting, elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to JB-14:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and country governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 09:29:48 AM

To: gls@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Meagan Bayless
Address: 2330 Calle Reina
City: Santa Fe
State: NM
Zip: 87505
Phone: 505-474-8655
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments: As a New Mexico native, a student of Natural Resources Management from Colorado State University, and a concerned citizen I do not support continued degradation of riparian areas by cattle grazing. Long-term sustainable agriculture cannot support cattle in riparian areas, especially on our public lands.

MB-1

I support banning cattle grazing in riparian areas and suggest more cooperation between volunteers to help ranchers accomplish this large task. There must be a way to meet on this issue and I support taking a strong stance and seeking a quality long-term solution that does not include favoring cows over native wildlife.

Remote_Addr: 150.131.119.122
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows NT; DigExt)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MB-1:

The BLM welcomes partners and volunteers who can assist with the restoration of riparian habitats in New Mexico.

CHAPTER 1

Mary Ella Christian
P. O. Box 6
Tombstone, AZ 85638

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- MEC-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- MEC-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.
- MEC-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?
- MEC-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.
- MEC-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- MEC-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

Response to MEC-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to MEC-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to MEC-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to MEC-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

Response to MEC-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to MEC-6:

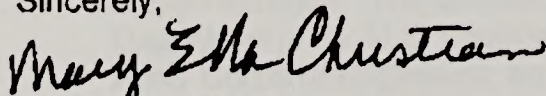
The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

CHAPTER 1

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| MEC-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| MEC-8 | 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
| MEC-9 | 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep? |
| MEC-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
| MEC-11 | 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. I do not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. Today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques. |
| MEC-12 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas? |
| MEC-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas? |
| MEC-14 | 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers. |

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Mary Ella Christian

Response to MEC-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to MEC-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to MEC-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to MEC-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to MEC-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to MEC-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to MEC-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting, elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to MEC-14:

As required by the NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 01:20:19 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Pete Connal
Address:
City: New River
State: AZ
Zip: 85087
Phone: 623-492-9190
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: The worst thing the BLM could do would be to ban logging and cattle from
public lands. Please
continue to do the good job your doing - thanks

PC-1

Remote_Addr: 208.152.72.235
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; Windows NT)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to PC-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for the continuation of logging and cattle grazing is noted.

CHAPTER 1

Caren Cowan
3821 Don Juan Court, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

CCa-1

I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.

CCa-2

Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.

CCa-3

I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

CCa-4

Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

CCa-5

One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?

CCa-6

1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

Response to CCa-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to CCa-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to CCa-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to CCa-4:

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Response to CCa-6:

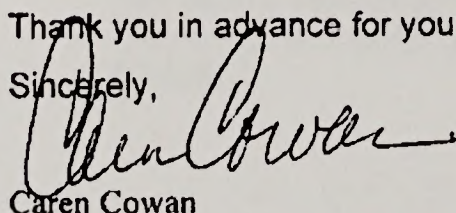
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CHAPTER 1

- CCa-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
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- CCa-14 | 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Caren Cowan

Response to CCa-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

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CHAPTER 1

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Response to CCa-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to CCa-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to CCa-14:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association

2231 RIO GRANDE BLVD., N.W. • ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87104

P.O. BOX 7517 • ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87194

TELEPHONE (505) 247-0584 • FAX (505) 842-1766 • E-MAIL NMCGA@RT66.COM

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the
Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

On behalf of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association (NMCGA) and its membership, I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

CCb-1

The NMCGA is strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. The NMCGA supports Alternative 1, Current Management.

CCb-2

Many members of the NMCGA are also BLM permittees in the Farmington area. Although they will be affected by the changes proposed in this draft EIS, they did not receive a copy of the document. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.

CCb-3

The NMCGA can see and concurs with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

CCb-4

Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? We do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CCb-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to CCb-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to CCb-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to CCb-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of Volume 1 of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

CHAPTER 1

- | | |
|--------|--|
| CCb-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management? |
| CCb-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy. NMCGA is a co-plaintiff in this lawsuit. |
| CCb-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| CCb-8 | 3. We question the presumptions that you made in the socioeconomic sections of this draft EIS that any Alternative will not have a direct impact on any economics of this area. You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does that make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
| CCb-9 | 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep? |
| CCb-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
| CCb-11 | 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. The NMCGA does not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. We feel that today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques. |
| CCb-12 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas? |
| CCb-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been |

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CCb-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to CCb-6:

The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

Response to CCb-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to CCb-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to CCb-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to CCb-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to CCb-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

Response to CCb-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to CCb-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

CHAPTER 1

CCb-13
(cont.)

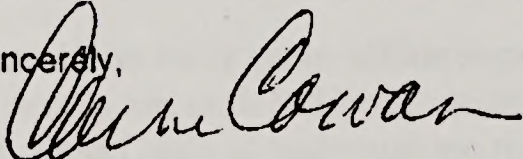
mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas?

CCb-14

9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Caren Cowan
Executive Secretary

Cc: New Mexico Congressional Delegation
Governor Gary Johnson
Lt. Governor Walter Bradley
Michelle Chavez, State BLM Director

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CCB-14:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1

Robert E. Cowan
Cowan Ranches
P. O. Box 309
Tombstone, AZ 85638

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

REC-1

I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.

REC-2

Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.

REC-3

I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

REC-4

Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

REC-5

One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?

REC-6

1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to REC-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to REC-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to REC-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to REC-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

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Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

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CHAPTER 1

- REC-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
- REC-8 | 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action?
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- REC-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous.
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- REC-12 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas?
- REC-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas?
- REC-14 | 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Cowan

Robert E. Cowan

Response to REC-7:

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CHAPTER 1

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Response to REC-12:

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Response to REC-13:

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CHAPTER 1

New Mexico Public Lands Council
P.O. Box 1633
Roswell, NM 88202

2000 JAN 14 11:16
607 FARMINGTON, NM

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

- BE-1 On behalf of the New Mexico Public Lands Council (NMPLC) and its membership, I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NMPLC is strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. We support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- BE-2 I would like to commend you on the proper use of the No Action Alternative in this document, with no changes from current management, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- BE-3 I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process. Many members of the NMPLC are also BLM permittees in the Farmington area. Although they will be affected by the changes proposed in this draft EIS, they did not receive a copy of the document. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important.
- BE-4 The NMPLC can see and concurs with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?
- BE-5 Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? We have documented specific concerns below.
- BE-6 One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- BE-7 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BE-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

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Thank you for your comment on Alternative 1 (the no Action Alternative).

Response to BE-3:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

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Response to BE-7:

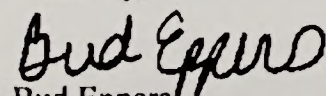
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CHAPTER 1

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Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bud Eppers
President

Cc: New Mexico Congressional Delegation
Governor Gary Johnson
Lt. Governor Walter Bradley
Michelle Chavez, State BLM Director

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BE-8:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP contained in this document. Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to BE-9:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to BE-10:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to BE-11:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to BE-12:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

CHAPTER 1

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BE-13:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water law would be taken.

Response to BE-14:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use would be required so that the land could achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to BE-15:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 11:41:26 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Tammy Ferguson
Address: 1877 East 3500 South
City: Vernal
State: UT
Zip: 84078
Phone: 435-789-6589

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Comments: The No action alternative is best for this situation. Multiple use planning which include

TF-1

grazing does not harm the habitat anymore than
deer, elk, horses, or other wildlife that utilize
these areas.

Remote_Addr: 168.177.197.15

HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; DigExt; GO Network v1)

HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html

HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TF-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

Callie Gnatkowski
1400 Pennsylvania NE, Apt. G.
Albuquerque, NM 87110

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- CG-1 I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- CG-2 Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.
- CG-3 I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?
- CG-4 Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.
- CG-5 One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- CG-6 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CG-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to CG-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to CG-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to CG-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

Response to CG-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to CG-6:

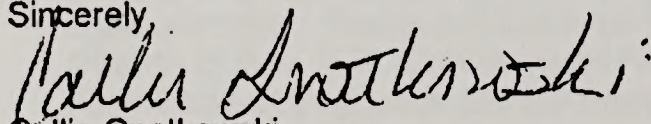
The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

CHAPTER 1

- CG-7 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
- CG-8 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action?
- CG-9 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep?
- CG-10 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous.
- CG-11 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. I do not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. Today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques.
- CG-12 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas?
- CG-13 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas?
- CG-14 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Callie Gnatkowski

Response to CG-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to CG-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to CG-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to CG-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to CG-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to CG-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to CG-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

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Response to CG-14:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 10:11:31 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: George Johnson
Address: 255 Old Adobe Rd
City: Los Gatos
State: Ca
Zip: 95032
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

GJ-1

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I do not support the Center for Biological Diversity's self proclaimed "hard nose" position. I would not support a remove everything position and urge you not to support Alternative Three

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HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to GJ-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

CHAPTER 1

Diann Lee
P. O. Box 515
Bosque, NM 87006-0515

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- DL-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- DL-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.
- DL-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?
- DL-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.
- DL-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- DL-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to DL-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to DL-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to DL-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

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Response to DL-6:

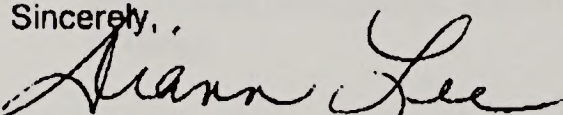
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CHAPTER 1

- DL-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
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Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Diann Lee

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

Mike Lee
P. O. Box 515
Bosque, NM 87006-0515

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

ML-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.

ML-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.

ML-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

ML-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

ML-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?

ML-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to ML-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to ML-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to ML-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to ML-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

Response to ML-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to ML-6:

The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

CHAPTER 1

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| ML-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| ML-8 | 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
| ML-9 | 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep? |
| ML-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
| ML-11 | 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. I do not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. Today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques. |
| ML-12 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas? |
| ML-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas? |
| ML-14 | 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers. |

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Lee

Mike Lee

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to ML-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to ML-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to ML-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to ML-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not an issue for riparian habitat management planning.

Response to ML-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to ML-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to ML-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to ML-14:

As required by the NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1

Mrs. Lou McDonald
P. O. Box 4676
Huachuca City, AZ 85616

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- MLM-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- MLM-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.
- MLM-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?
- MLM-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.
- MLM-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- MLM-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MLM-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to MLM-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to MLM-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

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Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of Volume 1 of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

Response to MLM-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to MLM-6:

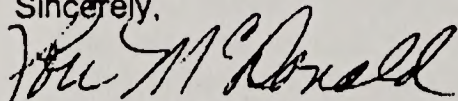
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CHAPTER 1

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| MLM-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| MLM-8 | 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
| MLM-9 | 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep? |
| MLM-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
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| MLM-12 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas? |
| MLM-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas? |
| MLM-14 | 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers. |

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Mrs. Lou McDonald

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MLM-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

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Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to MLM-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

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Response to MLM-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to MLM-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

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CHAPTER 1



*Sustainable Agriculture
Protecting The Environment
& All Its Creatures*

NEW MEXICO WOOL GROWERS, INC.

2231 Rio Grande NW - P.O. Box 7520

Albuquerque, NM 87194

Phone: (505) 247-0584 - FAX: (505) 842-1766

72 JAN 15 11:14
63 FARMINGTON, NM

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

RLM-1

On behalf of the New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc. (NMWGI) and its membership, I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NMWGI is strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. The NMWGI supports Alternative 1, Current Management.

RLM-2

I would like to commend you on the proper use of the No Action Alternative, with no changes from current management, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) that was used in the document.

RLM-3

I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process. Many members of the NMWGI are also BLM permittees in the Farmington area. Although they will be affected by the changes proposed in this draft EIS, they did not receive a copy of the document. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important.

RLM-4

The NMWGI can see and concurs with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas?

RLM-5

Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? We do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RLM-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to RLM-2:

Thank you for your comment on Alternative 1 (the No Action Alternative).

Response to RLM-3:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to RLM-4:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to RLM-5:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of Volume 1 of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

CHAPTER 1

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| RLM-6 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management? |
| RLM-7 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy. NMWGI is a co-plaintiff in this lawsuit. |
| RLM-8 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| RLM-9 | 3. We question the presumptions that you made in the socioeconomic sections of this draft EIS that any Alternative will not have a direct impact on any economics of this area. You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population is in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does that make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Farmington Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
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| RLM-11 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
| RLM-12 | 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. The NMWGI does not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. We feel that today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques. |
| RLM-13 | 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas? |
| RLM-14 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will |

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RLM-6:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to RLM-7:

The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

Response to RLM-8:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP contained in this document. Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to RLM-9:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

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The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to RLM-11:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to RLM-12:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

Response to RLM-13:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to RLM-14:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.


The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses (e.g., grazing, hunting, and fishing) are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

CHAPTER 1

- RLM-14 | hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out
(cont.) | of these areas?
- RLM-15 | 9 Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this
draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on
livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that
represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Ron L. Merritt, Jr.
President

Cc: New Mexico Congressional Delegation
Governor Gary Johnson
Lt. Governor Walter Bradley
Michelle Chavez, State BLM Director

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RLM-15:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 09:46:22 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Michael Mills
Address: 32 Aggie Village J
City: Logan
State: Ut
Zip: 84341
Phone: (435) 797-6606
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
Comments: I am a student at Utah State University studying natural resource management and I am writing to express my comments for the DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat.

MM-1 | Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will receive improvement by the preferred alternative. I give my full support of the preferred alternative, which shows that proper management can allow multiple uses and still protect the environment. Please follow thorough by selecting the preferred alternative.

Thank you,
Michael Mills

Remote_Addr: 129.123.57.119
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.5 (en) (Win95; I)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MM-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 2 is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 10:06:42 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Kitty Randall
Address: 4880-C Yucca St.
City:
State:
Zip:
Phone:

KR-1

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please take action to reduce livestock grazing in riparian areas of New Mexico. Environmental degradation of watersheds is a serious concern, and though I am sympathetic to ranchers' interests, BLM land belongs to all of us and should not be overgrazed. Let's leave a healthy environment for future generations.
-- Sincerely, Kitty Randall

Remote_Addr: 205.188.195.43
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; AOL 4.0; Mac_PPC)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to KR-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for reduced livestock grazing in riparian areas is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 08:52:51 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat
:

Name: Keith Sonnier
Address: 3916 Brentwood Avenue
City: Lake Charles
State: LA
Zip: 70607
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
Please select the alternative that does not ban logging and cattle grazing. Thank you!

KS-1

Remote_Addr: 208.202.163.70
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; Windows 95)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to KS-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for continued logging and cattle grazing is noted.

CHAPTER 1

Randy Summers
3821 Don Juan Court, NW
Albuquerque, NM 87107

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- RS-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management.
- RS-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process.
- RS-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal, will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the Draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its efforts towards the health of those very small areas?
- RS-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below.
- RS-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management?
- RS-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RS-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

Response to RS-2:

The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to RS-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to RS-4:

Management of saltcedar and Russian olive will occur after a thorough analysis of the management needs for each riparian area. Please see the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) for information on invasive species control for riparian areas. All vegetation management will comply with the findings of the BE presented in Appendix B of Volume 2 of the FEIS and will follow the stipulations of the BO issued by the USFWS (1997).

Response to RS-5:

Funding issues did not drive the need to develop riparian and aquatic HMPs. As stated in the DEIS, improving riparian habitat has and continues to be a BLM management goal. While developing budget priorities continues to be a challenge for public and private organizations, the BLM does not view the funding for riparian management as a "zero sum game" that deprives other field office activities of adequate funding. A HMP for riparian systems provides the documentation needed to assist in developing field office budget priorities.

Response to RS-6:

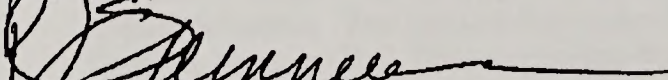
The CWAP contains publicly available data and technical monitoring information that was referenced in the DEIS. The use of these data to characterize the general condition of New Mexico watersheds gives the reader the most current technical information available.

CHAPTER 1

- RS-7 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?"
- RS-8 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action?
- RS-9 4. The draft EIS also discusses fencing specifications. Who will install these fences if they are required? Who will pay for them? Who will be responsible for maintenance and upkeep?
- RS-10 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous.
- RS-11 6. Section 4.1.1 of the draft EIS addresses grazing. I do not disagree that historic overgrazing may have caused long-term damage to many rangelands and other areas in the state. However, that damage is probably a century old. Today's livestock producers have more knowledge and manage their operations more scientifically than producers in the past may have. The document's emphasis on the problems caused by overgrazing seems more than extreme because of today's management techniques.
- RS-12 7. The draft EIS states that alternative water sources will be provided in areas where livestock and wildlife's access to riparian areas have been denied. What happens to water rights? Is this not a "taking" of private property? Who will pay for these wells and/or other forms of watering sources to be installed? What incentives have been offered to permittees to help them better manage these areas?
- RS-13 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas?
- RS-14 9. Why were no organizations representing the livestock industry contacted for input into this draft EIS? It seems that before considering an action which will have such an impact on livestock producers, the BLM would at least contact producers or the organizations that represent those producers.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Randy Summers

Response to RS-7:

The reference to conventional wisdom relates to the perception expressed by a majority of commenters in the public scoping process that grazing by domestic livestock is responsible for the deterioration of riparian habitats. The selection of the Grazing Management Alternative was in response to that observation, although it was not the preferred alternative, nor was it selected as the basis for the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS). Although the Grazing Management Alternative would exclude grazing by domestic livestock categorically from all riparian areas, the analysis of scientific evidence versus conventional wisdom led to the selection of the preferred alternative, which does provide for selective livestock grazing.

Response to RS-8:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to RS-9:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside of grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to RS-10:

Environmental justice issues were discussed in the DEIS. None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Because no measurable economic impacts would result from implementation of any of the alternatives and all three alternatives would result in increased environmental quality, environmental justice issues are not addressed in riparian habitat management planning.

Response to RS-11:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of the BLM public land. Most of this land is in sustainable condition. The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Scientific literature available through bibliographic reference services documents the effects of livestock grazing on riparian areas. The DEIS also discussed other factors beyond livestock grazing that may contribute to riparian degradation.

CHAPTER 1

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Response to RS-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to RS-13:

If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Carrying capacities for grazing animals (livestock and wildlife) using public land are now based on monitoring. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring, and also take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of a use activity (e.g., recreation, hunting elk grazing), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

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Response to RS-14:

As required by NEPA, public scoping at the start of the EIS process and public comment on the DEIS were open and available to all individuals; private and public organizations; city and county governments; and local, state, and federal agencies. Please see Section 5.1 of the DEIS and Section 6 of the FEIS (Volume 2) for further information on public participation actions undertaken by the BLM.

CHAPTER 1

Rachel Thomas
P. O. Box 4637
Huachuca City, AZ 85616

January 11, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

I am writing to comment on the above-specified Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

- | | |
|------|--|
| RT-1 | I am strongly opposed to the preferred alternative specified in the draft EIS, adaptive management, or any other alternative that would adversely affect grazing permittees and livestock producers in the area. I support Alternative 1, Current Management. |
| RT-2 | Many BLM permittees in the Farmington area have not received copies of the draft EIS although they will be affected by the changes it proposes. These permittees need a chance to receive, review and comment on the document, since their livestock operations and livelihoods will be impacted by the decision made. Since this document will also serve as the EIS for the RMP amendment, participation from affected interests is even more important. I would like to request a 60-day extension of the comment period to allow everyone a chance to participate in the process. |
| RT-3 | I can see and concur with the necessity of protecting riparian areas. However, managing everything towards one single goal will not work. How can you manage for the health of the riparian areas without considering all of the other elements that make up the ecosystem? Why would you want to manage for one single idea to the exclusion of anything else? Since current management has already restored some riparian areas, why not continue with what is already working? Page S-2 of the draft EIS, states "...riparian habitats are critical but very small areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM." How can the BLM manage all of its land towards the health of those very small areas? |
| RT-4 | Additionally, when management has one single focus, rather than being balanced, conflicts can develop. For example, the draft EIS discusses the need to treat invasive weeds, including salt cedar, to improve riparian health. However, the document also states that the southwestern willow flycatcher nests in salt cedar. How will this conflict be resolved? I do have some additional, specific concerns, which are documented below. |
| RT-5 | One of the reasons cited for the focus on riparian management, rather than continuing to manage for different goals, is a lack of funding. If there is not enough money to manage with a balanced approach, where will the money come from to focus on riparian management? |
| RT-6 | 1. The use of the Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) as a guide for the quality of watersheds in the state is inappropriate and in violation of NEPA. The CWAP is a significant Federal action that requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or full EIS consistent with the provisions of the NEPA. The required EA and/or EIS have not been completed. Additionally, any use of the CWAP should be held up until a judgment is rendered in the lawsuit filed against its implementation. The lawsuit has been filed by the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts et al vs. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Agriculture, US Army Corps of Engineers, and US Department of Interior regarding the CWAP/Unified Strategy. |

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RT-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 1 is noted.

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The comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to RT-3:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

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Response to RT-6:

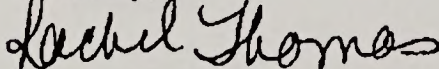
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CHAPTER 1

- | | |
|-------|---|
| RT-7 | 2. Page 2-11 of the draft EIS states "The Grazing Management Alternative is a response to the conventional wisdom that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." What scientific data is used to make that determination? How can you base a decision that could economically harm rural families on "conventional wisdom?" |
| RT-8 | 3. How can you presume that the changes proposed by this draft EIS will not have a significant impact on the economics of this area? You are not taking into account the economic impacts to individual producers. Livestock production in the Farmington Field Office may only make up .02 percent of the state total, but what portion of the local economy is impacted? Given that some half of the state's population in Albuquerque, statewide impact does not even apply. What difference does statewide impact make to the producer that is put out of business when his BLM permit is cut? The Socioeconomic Analysis has no value in determining the effects of the proposed action on the citizens within the Taos Field Office, which is the whole goal of the analysis, because it only uses statewide totals. Why would you not look at the effects to individuals in your office as well as to rural communities and other rural families impacted? Would that not be the best way to analyze the socioeconomic effects of this action? |
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| RT-10 | 5. Was an environmental justice study conducted on the draft EIS? If so, what were the results? What are the low income and minority populations? How will those impacts be mitigated? Given the ethnic makeup of the Farmington area, they are likely to be enormous. |
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| RT-13 | 8. Why has the damage caused by elk or other wildlife to these riparian areas not been mentioned or addressed in the document? How can riparian area management be improved if the impacts caused by ALL animals grazing in the area has not been analyzed? Will hunting and fishing in these areas be denied also? How will you keep recreational users out of these areas? |
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Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Thomas

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RT-7:

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CHAPTER 1

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Response to RT-12:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken.

Response to RT-13:

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Response to RT-14:

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CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/11/2000 07:10:21 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Dick Young
Address: P.O. Box 591
City: Glenbrook
State: NV
Zip: 89413
Phone: (775) 749-5545
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

DY-1 My comment is that "no change" be made to the proposed plan. Cattle grazing is an important and integral part of the stewardship responsibility of the BLM. Responsible cattle grazing is a benefit to the county tax roles, allows a reasonable and decent living to the rancher, and provides a required product to the nation.

Thank you for your consideration to my comments.

Dick Young

Remote_Addr: 63.24.41.48
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.7 [en] (Win98; U)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to DY-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for continued cattle grazing is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/12/2000 09:17:22 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Ty Bays
Address: P. O. Box 2982
City: Silver City
State: NM
Zip: 88062
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As New Mexican I would like to see grazing and logging continued at current levels or more. These activities are part of our heritage and play a vital role in our economy. Oust the greens and keep our State environmentally healthy while keeping New Mexicans working. The majority of NM farmers and ranchers do a good job of taking care of our wildlife and lets let them continue this practice. After all willow flycatchers and numerous others have survived 100 years of grazing and I find it appalling that we blame agriculture for there demise.

TB-1

Remote_Addr: 198.176.208.42
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; Windows NT)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

Response to TB-1:

The BLM recognizes that economic, social, and cultural elements are integral components of public land management. The Riparian and Aquatic HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) reflects BLM's intent to promote harmony among the multiple users (e.g., ranchers and recreationists) who depend on the BLM land and its natural resources. However, it must be recognized that when it comes to species protected by the ESA, focus on a single species may be required. These laws require that the BLM take specific actions to protect the environment, and these laws are not overridden by the FLPMA.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/12/2000 12:08:02 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: R. Benne
Address: 10111 E. Cholla St.
City: scottsdale
State: AZ
Zip: 85260
Phone:

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: I stongly support the PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE for the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the draft environmental impact statement.

RB-1

The preferred alternative alternative was developed with the input and collabaration of all involved and should represent the most reasonable way to meet the goals.

I DO NOT support the removal of livestock as I believe they can be a strong tool for the continuing improvement of range conditions.

Remote_Addr: 12.72.32.75
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; AT&T WNS5.0; DigExt)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to RB-1:

Thank you for your comment; your support for Alternative 2 is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Gary Johnson
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Box 30005, Dept. 3189
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003-8005
Telephone (505) 646-3007

Frank A. DuBois
Secretary

January 12, 2000

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

The following comments address the Bureau of Land Managements (BLM) draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office - New Mexico.

1. Section 1508.9, Environmental Assessment, of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations states, "Environmental Assessment": (b) Shall include brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives as required by section 102(2)(E), of the environmental **impacts** of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted." [emphasis added]. The significant language of this section is the use of the term "impacts" [i.e., effects]. "Effects" is defined in the CEQ-NEPA regulations at §1508.8 as follows:

'Effects' include:

- (a) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.
- (b) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.

Effects and impacts as used in these regulations are synonymous. Effects includes ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components,

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader
January 12, 2000
Page 2

structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems),
aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health,
whether direct, indirect, or **cumulative**. [emphasis added].

The term "cumulative impact" is defined in 40 CFR §1508.7:

'Cumulative impact' is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

In addition to impacts, section 1502.14 of CEQ-NEPA regulations states, "This section is the heart of the environmental impact statement. Based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment (§1502.15) and the Environmental Consequences (§1502.16), it should present the environmental impacts of the proposal and the alternatives in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decisionmaker and the public. In this section agencies **shall**: (F) Include appropriate **mitigation** measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives." [emphasis added].

Mitigation is defined in section 1508.20 as follows:

"Mitigation" includes:

- (a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action.
- (b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation.
- (c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment.
- (d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action.
- (e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The pertinent regulations cited above require comprehensive, detailed analyses of the listed factors (ecological, aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, and health) be

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader

January 12, 2000

Page 3

FAD-1	<p>included in the DEIS document. This DEIS addresses the economically quantifiable use (grazing) of riparian areas. Alternatives may or may not have a direct effect on individuals, the livestock industry, and local communities of New Mexico, however, there could also be indirect and cumulative effects on individuals, the livestock industry and local communities. The BLM should not only identify the economic impacts (direct, indirect, and cumulative), of all the alternatives, but it should also quantify these impacts. In addition, the BLM should provide mitigation measures for all the alternatives. New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) requests the BLM comply with sections 1508.7, 1508.8, 1508.9, 1502.14 and 1508.20 of the CEQ-NEPA regulations in their entirety.</p>
FAD-2	<p>2. NMDA requests a clarification on who will pay for the fencing required to implement livestock management in riparian areas.</p>
FAD-3	<p>3. As stated by the BLM on page 4-28, "Improvement of many areas would be limited by the fragmented distribution of BLM riparian areas and the lack of coordinated watershed management efforts (1999)."¹ NMDA requests the BLM provide citations of cost benefit analyses that show the public will benefit from a small segment of stream attaining proper functioning condition (PFC), due to "the fragmented distribution of BLM riparian areas."</p>
FAD-4	<p>On page S-5, Water Quality and Quantity for alternative 2 (preferred alternative) the following is written, "Small improvements would occur in water quality from decreased erosion and deposition" This statement contradicts information provided later in the document. On Page 4-28 under the Cumulative Impacts (Section 4.6) the following statement is made, "While the water quality affected by BLM land uses might improve, it is not expected that any of the water quality-limited stream reaches identified by the state would improve enough to meet state standards solely from this action.", and on page 4-7, "In general, the quantity, quality, and availability of water from nearby streams and rivers is outside the control of the BLM." Which of these statements is correct? Will water quality improve in drainages where the preferred alternative is implemented? Does baseline data exist to gauge an increase or decrease in water quality? If yes, please provide the data or citation, if no, then what is the justification for of each of these statements?</p>

¹U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1999b, Draft Statewide Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Impact Statement New Mexico Standards for Public Land Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management, BLM/NM/PL-99-001-1020, New Mexico State Office, Santa Fe, N.M., Feb.

Response to FAD-1:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential economic impacts.

Response to FAD-2:

The BLM will provide funding for fencing. The construction and maintenance costs will be negotiated between the BLM and the permittee, which is normally done for range improvement projects. In general, the BLM maintains fences outside grazing allotments, while the permittees maintain those within the grazing allotments.

Response to FAD-3:

The BLM's goal is to invest in economically and environmentally sound riparian improvements to enhance the public lands for multiple uses. Prior to implementing an improvement, an EA and a cost/benefit analysis are prepared to determine the best format for the project. One of the priorities for using rangeland improvement funds is to protect and enhance critical resources and values.

Response to FAD-4:

Improvements in or maintenance of riparian vegetation cover is expected to reduce local soil erosion rates and decrease local deposition of sediments into stream channels, thus improving local water runoff conditions. However, as the DEIS clearly states, riparian areas under the jurisdiction of the BLM represent a small percentage of all riparian areas and a small percentage of the larger watersheds that influence water quality in the streams and rivers in the State of New Mexico. Thus, measurable changes in overall stream and river water quality within the State of New Mexico will require a cooperative effort among public and private landowners and land managers.

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Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader

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- FAD-5 | On Page S-5 Soil Erosion/Deposition the statement is made for the preferred alternative, "Improvement in soil erosion and deposition would be better than that under Alternative 1." It is questionable that a stream which is PFC under the current management alternative would function any different then the same stretch of stream at PFC under the adaptive management alternative. NMDA requests BLM provide additional information to support this claim.
- FAD-6 | NMDA requests the BLM provide citations or the location of hydrologic data used to classify each riparian area as either perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral.

The definition of riparian area presented in this DEIS on page 1-1 is as follows,

The BLM defines a "riparian area" as an area of land directly influenced by permanent water. It has visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Lake shores and stream banks are typical riparian areas. Excluded are such sites as ephemeral streams or washes that do not exhibit the presence of vegetation dependent upon free water in the soil.

- FAD-7 | Due to the large amount of ephemeral streams administered by the Farmington Field Office, NMDA requests a specific list of plant species and the number of each species needed to classify an ephemeral stream as a riparian area. NMDA also requests the Farmington Field Office provide in this DEIS a list of riparian plant species that need to be present in order for any stream segment, spring, or seep to be classified as a riparian area.
- FAD-8 | 4. On page S-3, this statement is made under general approach for the preferred alternative, "Develop explicit goals for which progress can be measured by a set of specific endpoints (desired future condition, such as PFC, increased use by special status species . . .)." Is it prudent to measure success by "increased use by special status species?" Are there studies conducted in the southwest that verify once a riparian habitat is available, the species of concern will occupy that habitat? NMDA requests the BLM provide citations that support the repatriation of an unoccupied critical habitat.
- FAD-9 | Are citations available to classify a given unoccupied riparian area as historic habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher? If yes, please provide citations, if no, then what is the justification for calling a riparian area, potential long-term or currently potential habitat, when the species did not occur in the riparian area in the past?
- FAD-10 | On Page A-23 the following statement is made, "The habitats it uses in the wintering grounds are unknown. However, tropical deforestation may restrict wintering habitat for

Response to FAD-5:

The statement refers to the expected improvement in those riparian areas that are not at PFC. Please refer to Table 1.1 in the DEIS and Table 3.2 in the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS).

Response to FAD-6:

The information was obtained from the PFC survey files maintained in the Farmington Field Office. The surveys are performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits. The criteria to be used for each allotment will be determined by BLM resource specialists, in cooperation with permittees, and will involve the best available science and methodology that apply to a specific area and concern.

Response to FAD-7:

A list of riparian obligate plants would not have an effect on decisions relative to riparian and aquatic habitat management, which is why an exhaustive list of wildlife species that make use of riparian and aquatic habitats was not included in the DEIS. The dominant native and exotic plant species of concern (e.g., cottonwoods, willows, Russian olive, and saltcedar) were addressed throughout the DEIS. Other common riparian plant species were often mentioned in the descriptions of the specific riparian and wetland areas provided in Chapter 3 of the DEIS.

Response to FAD-8:

The BLM agrees that the occupation of habitat by a special status species cannot be guaranteed. A measurable indicator of a special status species goal would be a set of habitat conditions (e.g., vegetation structure). However, a long-term goal of the BLM is to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species and the occupation of new habitat by these species, which can be measured and documented. The Farmington Field Office conducts annual surveys on current and short-term potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat to estimate population numbers.

Response to FAD-9:

Please see the text in Section B.2.16 (Appendix B) for background issues and the proposed management of the southwestern willow flycatcher.

Response to FAD-10:

The BLM is required by law to conduct land management actions on public land administered by the Farmington Field Office that can be demonstrated to assist in the recovery of designated critical habitat for threatened and endangered species. The BLM agrees that other factors outside of the control of the Farmington Field Office can affect the survival of threatened and endangered species. However, these factors do not affect the legal requirements of the ESA.

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Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader

January 12, 2000

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FAD-10 (cont.)	<p>this and other neotropical migrants." Given the above statement, additional scientific data are needed to understand how to recover this species. Other factors such as loss of wintering habitat, a migratory niche taken over by a more adaptable species, predation, and use of pesticides in the tropics that are restricted in the United States could be contributing to the decline of this species in its wintering range. Without wintering range data, exclusion of livestock in its summer range may not aid in the recovery of this species. NMDA requests BLM justify its proposed exclusion of livestock grazing in riparian areas, in light of a lack of scientific data on the influence of winter grounds (in other countries) on restoration of southwestern willow flycatchers.</p>
FAD-11	<p>5. On page 4-22 the following statement is made, "Overall, it is anticipated that the Adaptive Management Alternative would provide greater benefits to wildlife and species of concern than either the Current Management Alternative or the Grazing Management Alternative." NMDA requests BLM provide data or citations to justify this statement.</p>
FAD-12	<p>6. After analyzing the alternatives and looking at past management prescription, how does the end result, relative to grazing, of each alternative differ from one another? The tone of this DEIS (page 2-11) can be summed up as follows, "... the conventional wisdom [is] that grazing by domestic livestock is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed at any time." NMDA requests scientific literature citations that support this conventional wisdom. On page 3 of BLM's own technical report, Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas, the following statement is made,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Livestock grazing can be a compatible use in riparian areas when managed in harmony with land management objectives, and when the function, capability, and potential of the site and the needs of the riparian vegetation guide the development of grazing management prescription.</p> <p>Differing opinions exist in the two BLM documents. Why is livestock grazing considered a compatible use of riparian areas in the technical report, and is now an inappropriate use of riparian areas based on conventional wisdom?</p>
FAD-13	<p>7. Once a riparian area has reached proper functioning condition, will livestock grazing be resumed for alternatives 1 and 2? During a drought, will the riparian enclosure be used as a relief pasture? If grazing will not be resumed, NMDA requests the BLM provide citations or additional justification for not resuming grazing in a riparian area that has attained PFC.</p>
FAD-14	<p>8. It does not appear, from the information provided in this DEIS, there is a protocol in place for the implementation of livestock management in riparian areas. NMDA request</p>

Response to FAD-11:

The reader is directed to the set of issues discussed in Chapter 4 of the DEIS. The primary benefit of riparian habitat management would be the improvement in vegetation composition and structure and the associated reduction in sedimentation runoff into receiving water bodies.

Response to FAD-12:

Except for Alternative 3 (Grazing Management), all alternatives provide for the continuation of domestic livestock grazing governed by the management practices that protect riparian habitat. The conventional wisdom mentioned on page 2-11 of the DEIS is a summary statement that reflects the types and numbers of public comments on domestic livestock grazing received during public scoping.

Response to FAD-13:

An adaptive management strategy allows for changes in domestic livestock grazing activities as a function of the condition of each individual riparian area. For example, under Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management), dormant season grazing would be permitted if sufficient vegetation composition and structure are present in riparian areas. However, riparian exclosures would not be developed as relief pastures during drought conditions.

Response to FAD-14:

Please see the HMP in Volume 2 of the FEIS.

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Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader

January 12, 2000

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FAD-14
(cont.)

BLM provide in this DEIS the criteria to be used for implementing each livestock management prescription, riparian pastures, winter grazing, long-term rest or total exclosure.

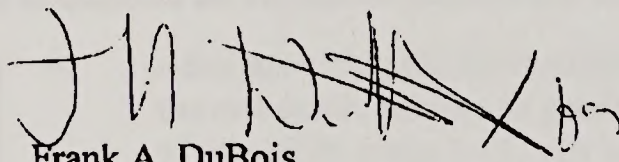
FAD-15

9. On Page 3-42, section 3.2.2.6, the final sentence in the first paragraph says there are four grazing allotments, when six grazing allotments are listed for La Jara Canyon. NMDA requests the BLM make this correction in the final draft of this DEIS.

FAD-16

NMDA believes the BLM decisions resulting from this planning process, based on a review of the preferred alternatives, could potentially have a negative effect on permittees and local communities in the Farmington Field Office area. As such, NMDA requests the BLM provide a full and fair disclosure to the public of the concerns expressed in this comment letter.

Sincerely,



Frank A. DuBois

FAD/rjw/gad

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to FAD-15:

Correction noted. Please see Appendix A of Volume 1 of the FEIS.

Response to FAD-16:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment. As evidenced, your letter representing the concerns of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA) has been included in this Comment and Response chapter of the FEIS.

CHAPTER 1



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6

1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202-2733

200 JAN 14 PM 11:22
GPO FORM 100-101

January 12, 2000

Mr. Bob Moore
Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has completed a limited review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed riparian and aquatic habitat management in the BLM Farmington Field Office area. The EIS examines a range of alternatives for restoring and protecting riparian habitats under BLM's jurisdiction which includes grazing management.

MPJ-1

Since the DEIS is programmatic in content and the alternatives considered promote environmental enhancement, EPA Region 6 has limited its review to insure that the DEIS meets the minimal administrative and procedural requirements established by the NEPA and the CEQ Regulations. EPA's limited review finds the DEIS to satisfy this requirement and takes no position (Lack of Objections) on the preferred action or the alternatives.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the DEIS. EPA requests that you send our office one copy of the FEIS at the same time that it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, EPA, 401 M Street S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael P. Jansky", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael P. Jansky, P.E.
Environmental Review Coordinator

Internet Address (URL) • <http://www.epa.gov>

Recycled/Recyclable • Printed with Vegetable Oil Based Inks on Recycled Paper (Minimum 25% Postconsumer)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to MPJ-1:

The BLM acknowledges receipt of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, comments.



Center for Biological Diversity

*protecting and restoring the west's deserts, grasslands, rivers, forests, and wildlife
through science, education, policy development, and environmental law*

200 JAN 18 PM 2:37

070 FARMINGTON, NM

January 12, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM, Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

RE: Draft: Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in
the Albuquerque Field Office -- New Mexico

Please accept our comments regarding the above mentioned EIS.

Due to the fact that nearly all BLM lands in New Mexico are grazed, and most riparian and aquatic habitats have suffered extensive damage we support **Alternative 3**, exclusion of livestock use in all riparian habitats.

SJ-1

The DEIS points out many times that eliminating livestock use in riparian and aquatic habitats would result in the best protection for threatened and endangered wildlife and plants, water quality, recreation, and soils. We don't believe that the DEIS showed scientifically that manipulated grazing management can be beneficial to riparian habitats. However, Belsky, 1999 shows clearly that the overwhelming majority of science indicates that grazing in riparian areas causes harm under all management schemes.

Alternative Three seems to be the best action in light of all that will be gained. In the long run the cost will far out way the expense to protect T&E species, soils, and water quality.

Environmental Consequences

SJ-2

Section 4.1.1 seems to make the case for Alternative Three emphatically;

"Livestock grazing has damaged 80% of the streams and riparian ecosystems in arid regions of the western United States."

"The continued decline in riparian habitats in the West has been attributed, in part, to increased numbers of cattle in western rangelands."

"Overgrazing reduces the density and biomass of many plant and animal species, reduces biodiversity, aids the spread of exotic species, interrupts ecological succession, impedes the cycling of nitrogen (the most important limiting nutrient in the West), changes habitat structure, disturbs community organization, and can severely impact riparian-wetland

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SJ-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to SJ-2:

The comment reflects an opinion. Thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1

habitats (the biologically richest habitats in the region)."

"Cattle prefer to graze streamside riparian environments because these areas have flatter terrain, water, shade, and more succulent vegetation. Because of this livestock transition, riparian areas now receive heavier grazing pressures."

"Cattle can cause more damage to riparian zones than their often small numbers would suggest. They tend to avoid hot, dry environments and congregate in wet areas for shade, water, and succulent forage, spending 5 to 30 times more time in riparian zones than would be predicted from surface area alone."

"The physical effects of overgrazing on streams and streambanks can include: (1) shearing of streambank soils; (2) increase in water and wind erosion of exposed streambanks and channel soils because of loss of vegetative cover; (3) caving-in of streambanks from animal pressure; (4) reductions in streambank undercuts; (5) wider and shallower stream channels; (6) lower water tables; (7) increases in streambank slopes; (8) increases in summer stream water temperatures; (9) increases in streambank instability; (10) increases in suspended solids."

"Overgrazing also has detrimental effects on the biological resources of riparian-wetland areas. Livestock can alter riparian by (1) compaction of soil, which increases runoff and decreases water availability to plants; (2) removal of vegetation, which allows soil temperatures to rise, thereby increasing evaporation; (3) physical damage to vegetation by rubbing, trampling, and browsing; (4) increased dependance on shrubs for forage; and (5) altering the growth form of plants by removing terminal buds and stimulating lateral branching."

"Other effects of grazing on riparian vegetation include changes in species composition; decreases in plant vigor; changes in timing and amounts of organic energy leaving the riparian zone; decreases in canopy cover; reductions of vegetation hanging over and into the water column; reduction or alteration of the vertical and horizontal components of the tree, shrub, and herbaceous layers; and creation of conditions the favor exotic species (such as saltcedar)."

"Livestock contribute to the spread of exotic plant species by dispersing seeds in fur and dung and by reducing competition from native species by eating them."

"Cattle grazing can alter bird species composition by eliminating rare species as ecological generalists invade a site."

"Ground nesting birds are probably more severely effected by overgrazing than any other group of wildlife."

"Given the ubiquity of grazing in the West, species dependant on lush ungrazed ground cover are at risk, and doubtless their populations already are at levels far below historic

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

levels.”

“Livestock grazing effects raptors primarily by influencing the abundance and availability of their prey populations.”

“Livestock can effect small mammals directly (by trampling burrows, compacting soil, or competing for food) and indirectly (by altering the structure or species composition of the vegetation in a manner that influences habitat selection by small mammals).”

It would seem that in light of this overwhelming evidence that the preferred alternative would be to eliminate cattle grazing entirely from the western range, however even for the few remaining riparian areas considered in this DEIS the BLM prefers to continue grazing cattle. The preferred alternative is based largely on unsupported statements in section 4.1.1., such as;

- (1) “Dormant season use by livestock can generally result in improvement in the condition of riparian vegetation and in streambank stability.”
- (2) The best time for livestock to use riparian areas is from late fall to just before peak demand of those reserves for plant growth in the following spring.”

SJ-3

Neither of these statements are supported by scientific evidence. In fact both statements are countered by previous statements, “cattle will concentrate in riparian areas in the fall because adjacent upland vegetation is drier and less palatable than riparian vegetation. As herbaceous cover is depleted, livestock will shift browsing riparian shrubs (especially willows) before leaf drop, reducing residual cover needed for stream bank maintenance during subsequent high spring flows.” “Although riparian vegetation may prove resilient in the presence of livestock for several years, over the long term, species composition, structural diversity, width of riparian zone, and succession may be affected by the influence of livestock on the establishment and survival of tree seedlings.”

SJ-4

It would seem that proposing to develop intensive rest rotation riparian pastures would be counter to all that has been presented in section 4.1.1 that has a citation other than internal BLM documents. In degraded areas, the cessation of livestock grazing for 5 years or more or perhaps permanently will be necessary to restore the natural vegetation and restore other natural resource values (Behnke 1979). Why does the BLM propose to conduct yet another elaborate expensive experiment with our riparian habitat, that will not provide any knowledge that does not already exist? It's simple get the cows off and you will have everything the public expects of our public lands. Catering to a few ranchers is not working in the interest of the American public.

SJ-5

Additionally, protecting T&E species and working toward their delisting will not be accomplished by maintaining the status quo. Species need to be recovered, that is they need to have their numbers and range increase. Species like the Mexican gray wolf will not be delisted as long as they are confined to a small area which limits their numbers. Live stock numbers and distribution will have to brought under control. The ubiquity of the livestock problem will in and of itself prevent the recovery of the wolf. This will lead to more lawsuits, huge expenses to the public, and a crime against our children.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SJ-3:

The purpose of riparian habitat management is to focus on the health of these areas; however, the BLM has other goals that it needs to strive for to meet its mandate for managing public lands to accommodate multiple uses. Thus, where possible, the BLM is expected to find harmony between productive natural rangelands and the communities that depend on those rangelands.

Response to SJ-4:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent of Alternative 2 is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land.

Response to SJ-5:

Your concerns regarding the recovery of the Mexican gray wolf is noted. However, this issue is beyond the scope of the FEIS.

CHAPTER 1

Support for this claim is supported in your acknowledgment of the following scientific fact, "small mammals provide an important base for many animals at higher trophic levels." As well as the impact to deer, elk, and other food bases of the wolf.

I would now like to focus on the following two statement in the DEIS;

- (1) "where grazing occurs in riparian areas, seasonal use (particularly the dormant season) is the preferred management technique to maintain these areas once they have attained proper functioning condition."
- (2) The extreme position is that livestock grazing should be excluded from Western riparian ecosystems wherever possible because of the scarcity of these areas and their importance to wildlife."

Number one assumes that riparian areas can be "maintained" with cattle grazing, yet no evidence is given to support this statement other than the table in appendix B. High quality functioning riparian is not a result of grazing.

SJ-6

BLM criteria for PFC can be met after an area has been excluded from grazing, or has been severely limited to cattle impacts. That is because BLM criteria for PFC is compromised in order to allow the continuation of grazing. Nearly all non-agency peer-reviewed scientific literature shows that cattle degrade riparian ecosystems under all management schemes. Cattle are returned or allowed to continue to graze riparian ecosystems because that is the agencies preferred management practice, not because it will "maintain" the system as PFC.

SJ-7

Number two is the most puzzling of all. The overwhelming scientific evidence supports the removal of cattle from nearly all western range, and the majority of Americans support the removal of cattle to protect wildlife and water, yet the BLM views this as an "extreme position." I would argue that the extreme position would be to allow the BLM and other Federal and State agencies to continue to endanger wildlife and plants, cause flooding and desertification, pollute the water, and spend millions of our tax dollars every year to do it. Your position is extreme and a complete attack on common sense which shows a deep systemic lack of accountability to the American people. How did the BLM obtain this position? Is there any evidence that proves it to be true?

Proposed Management

SJ-8

We propose the BLM choose Alternative Three which would remove cattle from all the riparian areas described in the DEIS. We also believe that changes in the management of the uplands regarding cattle will need to be considered. None of the proposed alternatives can achieve their intended results until the uplands are considered as well. The only alternative that guarantees a level of recovery acceptable given the exclusion of management changes in the uplands is Alternative Three.

Drought Management

Response to SJ-6:

The Riparian and Aquatic HMP focuses on productive and proper functioning riparian areas. Where current uses are not interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, these uses may continue. Where current uses are interfering with achieving the riparian standards or objectives, the uses will be modified. The intent is to ensure proper management of the riparian/aquatic habitats on public land. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment.

Response to SJ-7:

It is the intent of the BLM to improve the health of the land, not to stop livestock grazing on public lands or put anyone out of business. If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, the appropriate action will be determined. For example, if the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of current grazing practices, a change in management of livestock would be required. If it is determined that the public land is not healthy because of another use (e.g., recreation), a change in management of that land use will be required so that the land can achieve its potential.

The purpose of riparian habitat management is to focus on the health of these areas; however, the BLM has other goals that it needs to strive for to meet its mandate for managing public land to accommodate multiple uses. Thus, where possible, the BLM is expected to find harmony between productive natural rangelands and the communities that depend on those rangelands.

Response to SJ-8:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

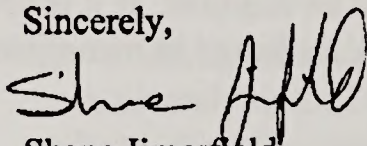
SJ-9

It is increasingly understood that the climate of the arid southwest is not predictable, and more variable than previously thought. A great deal of the damage caused by cattle to the land happens during periods of drought. Often the damage caused during a drought is irreparable or takes a very long time period to recover (often it will not as cattle are left to continue degrading the land or maintain the level of degradation caused during the drought). BLM needs to begin incorporating a Drought Management Plan into all grazing leases.

Management plans never consider the issue of drought. The BLM needs a mechanism built into the permit which would allow for a quick implementation of a previously decided plan to handle a dry period. Often a dry period can be as short as 3 for 4 months, and depending on the time of year cattle impacts could be severe. Often the only solution is to remove the cattle until the dry period has ended. Under current management practices this is nearly impossible.

That concludes our comments. Please keep me informed as to any decisions or further public participation processes.

Sincerely,



Shane Jimerfield
Assistant Director

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to SJ-9:

Thank you for your comment. BLM TR 1737-14, *Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas* (BLM 1997), addresses livestock management considerations associated with drought conditions.

CHAPTER 1



Central New Mexico Audubon Society

POST OFFICE BOX 30002 ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87190

January 12, 2000

Robert Moore, BLM Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
1235 La Plata Hwy, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

**Re: Draft EIS For Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the
Farmington Field Office -- New Mexico**

Dear Mr. Moore:

We write to strongly encourage you to adopt Alternative 3 presented in the draft EIS and to adopt that alternative for purposes of preparing the final Environmental Impact Statement.

Riparian areas are critical to wildlife, including birds, in the arid Southwest. However, it is known that livestock grazing has a particularly detrimental impact on riparian areas. Cattle, like people, like to be around water, but graze so as to destroy covering vegetation resulting in erosion, loss of wildlife habitat, etc.

Thank you for considering these comments, and we, again, strongly encourage you to adopt Alternative 3 in the final Environmental Impact Statement.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Myers".

Jeffrey D. Myers, Conservation Chair

JDM:pn

cc: Beth Hurst-Waitz, President, Central New Mexico Audubon Society
David Henderson, Director, National Audubon Society-New Mexico

F:\Pete\CORRESP\EIS-Audubon-Silva.ltr.doc

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JDM-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/12/2000 07:36:22 AM

To: gls@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Don Pennington
Address: 2144 Exchange
City: Wichita
State: KS
Zip: 67213-4939
Phone: (316)262-5819
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: We need to keep our public lands open to the public. No more wilderness.
Wilderness is a land of no use.

DP-1 |

Remote_Addr: 152.163.213.209
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; AOL 5.0; Windows 95; DigExt)
HTTP_Referer: <http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html>
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to DP-1:

This comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/12/2000 09:21:46 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Troy D. Sauble
Address: 3405 Calle Cuervo NW Apt 613
City: Albuquerque
State: NM
Zip: 87114
Phone: 899-2101

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
I believe that you need to listen to and include everyone in this decision

and not give in to the radical environmental movement who's only goal is to deny the people of New Mexico access to the lands and means of support that they have depended on for generations. There should be a middle ground that all can agree to meet. I ask that you stop and think about the people who use the land and depend upon it and who have cared for it for generations before these new comers and their big bucks and lawsuits. Thank you for your efforts and time.

Remote_Addr: 216.161.46.185
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HTTP_Referer: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

TDS-1

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TDS-1:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1

GOVERNOR
Gary E. Johnson



DIRECTOR AND SECRETARY
TO THE COMMISSION
Gerald A. Maracchini

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

DEPARTMENT OF GAME & FISH

Villagra Building
P.O. Box 25112
Santa Fe, NM 87504

Visit our Web Site home page at <http://www.gmfsh.state.nm.us>
For basic information or to order free publications: 1-800-862-9310

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Portales, NM

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Farmington, NM

George A. Ortega
Santa Fe, NM

January 12, 2000

Mr. Bob Moore
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401

RE: Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Environmental Impact Statement,
Farmington Field Office
NMGF Doc. No. 6935

Dear Mr. Moore:

The Department of Game and Fish (Department) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Management Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Farmington Field Office.

TWS-1

Page 1-1, under heading 1.2: Background, states that the BLM defines a "riparian area" as an area of land directly influenced by permanent water, having visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. We recommend elaborating on the definition of "riparian area". For example, some ephemeral washes have intermittent stream flow and no visible signs of permanent water, but also contain the vegetative component important to wildlife and indicative of riparian habitat.

TWS-2

The Department concurs with Alternative 2: Adaptive Management. This alternative provides a proactive approach for planning and implementing strategies for restoring and protecting riparian habitats, and incorporates a set of activities intended to achieve measurable improvement of riparian habitat and function. Alternative 2 also provides the Department and other interested parties the opportunity for further comment at the project level as management actions are developed for specific riparian areas.

TWS-3

For your information, species accounts and habitat associations can be accessed from the Department's Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M) database via the worldwide web at <http://nmnhp.unm.edu/bisonm/BISON.CFM> or <http://www.fw.vt.edu/fishex/states/nm.htm>.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to TWS-1:

There are many different definitions for riparian areas; however, many have similar characteristics. The following is the actual BLM riparian policy definition:

An area of land directly influenced by permanent water. It has visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Lake shores and streambanks are typical riparian areas. Excluded are such sites as ephemeral streams or washes that do not exhibit the presence of vegetation dependent upon free water in the soil (BLM 1992b).

Response to TWS-2:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 2 is noted.

Response to TWS-3:

The preparers of the document utilized the Department's Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M) database, particularly for preparation of the BE (Appendix B, Volume 1 of the FEIS). The BLM wishes to thank the State of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDG&F) for making this information available to the public.

CHAPTER 1

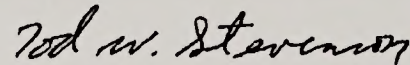
Mr. Bob Moore

2

January 11, 2000

Should you have any further questions regarding these comments, please contact Mike Gustin, Habitat Specialist, at 841-8881 or email at mgustin@state.nm.us

Sincerely,



Tod W. Stevenson
Chief, Conservation Services Division

TWS/MLG

CC: Supervisor (Ecological Services Field Office, USFWS)
Scott Brown (Assistant Director, NMGF)
Glenn Case (NW Area Supervisor, NMGF)
Robert Livingston (NW Area Asst. Chief, NMGF)
Conservation Services Technical Guidance Asst. Chief (NMGF)
Bruce Mazuranich (District Supervisor, NMGF)
Bob Culp (District Training Officer, NMDGF)
Mark Watson (Conservation Services Habitat Specialist, NMGF)
Mike Gustin (NW Area Operations Habitat Specialist, NMGF)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/14/2000 08:53:51 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name:
Address:
City:
State:
Zip:
Phone:
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Mutiple use is the ONLY AMERICAN WAY TO GO. Rhetoric from radicals is only
based on their greed and coveting of what others have.

UNK-1 |

Remote_Addr: 209.51.77.49
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 98; formatpb; DigExt)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to UNK-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for multiple use is noted.

CHAPTER 1



GARY E. JOHNSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax: (505) 827-2836



PETER MAGGIORE
SECRETARY

PAUL R. RITZMA
DEPUTY SECRETARY

January 20, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

**RE: BLM FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE DEIS FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT
MANAGEMENT**

This transmits New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) staff comments concerning the above-referenced Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Affected Environment

Inclusion of All BLM Riparian Areas In Farmington Field Office Area

The list of streams, wetlands, and springs comprising the affected environment appears to be quite comprehensive, but may still be incomplete. There is an additional BLM-administered reach of La Jara Creek upstream from La Jara Reach 1. The Puerco River may contain riparian habitat worthy of consideration by this EIS. Cutter Reservoir (T29N, R8W, S28 and 33) and Navajo Reservoir may include shoreline riparian habitat. Numerous springs managed by the BLM are present in the affected area and should be listed if they are associated with riparian habitat.

Clarification is needed as to how the riparian areas of the affected environment were inventoried, why specific riparian areas were excluded (e.g., if their management is addressed in an existing document), and whether this EIS also addresses management of riparian or wetland areas that are on BLM land but are not currently included in the BLM inventory.

Recommended Changes to Table 3.2

The caption for Table 3.2 on page 3-8 contains several errors. The caption should be changed as follows:

- a Notes: TMDL Segment = river miles for which total maximum daily load (TMDL) analysis must be completed; TMDL Schedule = the mandatory year of completion by NMED or EPA of a TMDL document describing the causes (water quality parameters) and sources

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to GC-1:

In 1994, when the riparian inventory was performed, the major washes were assessed where significant amounts of riparian habitat were expected. Additional tracts of riparian habitat will be recorded as the BLM continues to perform rangeland health assessments. Any additional habitats will be managed in accordance with the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS).

Response to GC-2:

Changes to Table 3.2 of the DEIS have been made on the basis of the suggestions in the comment. Please see Appendix A of Volume 1 of the FEIS.

CHAPTER 1

Bob Moore
January 20, 2000
Page 2

(discharges and land-use activities) of non-support; Causes of Non-support = water quality parameters for which the water quality of TMDL segments does not support their designated uses; NPDES Permits = discharge permits issued under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System; Water Supply Systems = regulated drinking water supply systems in the watershed that depend on surface water; COE §404 Permits = the number of actions (information provided, public meetings, field inspections, and permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [COE]) regarding §404 of the Clean Water Act and §10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act; USGS Stations = U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) stream gauging stations in the hydrologic unit.

Source: New Mexico Environment Department and Natural Resources Conservation Service (1998).

GC-2
(cont.)

The following changes to the table itself should be made:

1. The Blanco Canyon watershed has zero causes of non-support (no streams in this watershed were placed on the Clean Water Act (CWA) §303(d) List).
2. For the reason provided in item 1, the Blanco Canyon watershed has zero TMDL segment miles (rather than "no data"). This is probably because of an absence of perennial streams in the watershed.
3. The Blanco Canyon watershed also has zero discharge permits under NPDES and zero regulated drinking water systems utilizing surface water.
4. The San Juan River between Cañon Largo and Navajo Dam is scheduled for TMDL analysis no later than 2004 (not "NA" as reported in Table 3.2). The source for this information is the 1998 State of New Mexico §303(d) List for Assessed Stream and River Reaches, accessible on the NMED web site at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swqb/documents.html>.

Cereza Canyon Erroneously Referred to as Carrizo Canyon

GC-3

The canyon referred to as "Carrizo Canyon" (pp. 3-38 – 3-40), a tributary canyon to Cañon Largo, is referred to as Cereza Canyon on USGS Maps and on the BLM Land Status Maps.

Alternatives: Substantive New Alternative Recommended by NMED

GC-4

The stated goal of the BLM, in terms of riparian management, is "restoring and protecting riparian habitats" under its jurisdiction (p. S-1). Alternative 3 (Grazing Management), which excludes livestock from riparian areas, "probably would have a small adverse effect on the economies of New Mexico as a whole and northwestern New Mexico in particular" (Section 4.2.3.4, Socioeconomics, p. 4-25). It has been demonstrated that permanent removal of livestock from riparian areas results in the highest probability of successful recovery and that use of livestock grazing as a management tool for riparian recovery does not, under any management strategy, accelerate recovery faster than total exclusion (Kauffman et al. 1997). Alternative 2 (Adaptive Management), the preferred alternative, does not necessarily exclude livestock from riparian areas. Under Alternative 2 the BLM "would assign the highest priority to...protecting and restoring the riparian habitats" (Section 4.2.2, Adaptive Management, p. 4-19). Under Alternative 3 "[I]t is not anticipated that [ban on grazing] benefits would be greater than those under the Adaptive Management Alternative because under Adaptive Management, other positive factors could contribute to the overall benefit of the riparian areas" (Section

Response to GC-3:

The BLM acknowledges that this canyon is referred to as Cereza Canyon on some maps. However, in the BLM's records, this canyon is referred to as Carrizo Canyon, and so this spelling is retained in the FEIS.

Response to GC-4:

Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, is based on modern business practices of goal setting, inventory, and data collection to evaluate progress in achieving goals, and implementing corrective actions, if necessary, to meet the needs of individual riparian areas. Alternative 3, Grazing Management, was developed in response to public scoping input that clearly specified a need to exclude domestic livestock from riparian areas. Because Alternative 2 would clearly result in implementation of a number of actions or sets of actions to improve riparian habitat, there is no need to revise Alternative 3 or develop new alternatives.

CHAPTER 1

Bob Moore
January 20, 2000
Page 3

GC-4
(cont.)

4.2.3.1, Attainment of Proper Functioning Condition, p.4-25). Alternative 3 does not specifically provide for "other positive factors" but should. It simply bans livestock from riparian areas without allowing for management actions that would enhance the benefits of livestock exclusion. Alternative 3 should be revised to include other appropriate management actions or a new, more comprehensive alternative should be developed that is a synthesis of Alternatives 2 and 3.

Environmental Consequences

Compliance with State and Federal Environmental Regulations

GC-5

Active restoration of riparian areas requires an understanding of watershed and geomorphic processes in the design process. Permitting procedures are in place in part to ensure that work in stream channels will achieve desirable goals with minimal undesirable consequences. Several riparian management practices listed in Table 2.1 (p. 2-10) may require dredge and fill permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under §404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). These practices include construction of in-stream structures, some bank stabilization practices, construction of access sites on stream banks, and road construction or major maintenance (e.g., installation of culverts). Section 404 permits also require state approval under CWA §401 before work can commence. In New Mexico, state approval is promulgated under NMSA §74-6-5.

Impacts of Proposed Action on Water Quality

GC-6

The alternative that best supports the stated goal of restoration and protection of riparian habitats will be most beneficial to water quality. As stated in Table S.1 (p. S-5), water quality is primarily a function of overall watershed condition. However, protection of riparian areas is likely to have a significant positive impact on the amount of pollutants, particularly sediment, in streams. For example, establishment and protection of vegetation will likely stabilize stream banks and reduce erosion; livestock exclusion from riparian areas will likely reduce stream bank trampling, thereby reducing sediment loading, and also reduce nutrient transport to surface water.

Influence of Watershed Management on Riparian Areas

GC-7

The authors of the DEIS state (pp. S-2, 2-1, A-12) that segments of riparian areas under BLM jurisdiction are often only a small part of a larger area under other jurisdictions over which the BLM has no management responsibility or authority. By the same token, the BLM does have management responsibility for uplands that influences non-BLM administered riparian areas. Documented effects of land management activities (e.g., grazing, silviculture, fire management, road building and maintenance) on surface hydrology (especially infiltration, runoff, and erosion) can impact water quality and riparian health downstream in a watershed. Because these impacts primarily produce nonpoint source pollution loading, their remediation is voluntary under the CWA. Section 319(h) of the CWA outlines a grant program for nonpoint source pollution prevention projects which, in New Mexico, is managed by the Nonpoint Source Pollution Section of NMED's Surface Water Quality Bureau. NMED encourages the BLM to respond to future requests for proposal for nonpoint source pollution prevention projects.

Reference to the Soil Conservation Service

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to GC-5:

The BLM's goal is to invest in economically and environmentally sound riparian habitat improvements. Prior to implementing an improvement, an EA and a cost/benefit analysis are prepared to determine the best format for the project. In addition, all required permits are addressed during the project design phase.

Response to GC-6:

Thank you for your comment. Your concerns about improving water quality by restoring and protecting riparian habitats are noted. This is also a goal of the HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS).

Response to GC-7:

The BLM recognizes that the land it is responsible for managing is often connected to adjoining lands through functions and/or processes. Management programs worked out with the adjoining landowners are generally more effective and efficient than programs designed to address only public land management. BLM policy is to strive for science-based programs developed through partnering and coordinated planning. Management activities are implemented in careful and considered consultation, cooperation, and coordination with lessees, permittees, and others with vested interest in the use and/or restoration and maintenance of riparian areas and watersheds.

CHAPTER 1

Bob Moore
January 20, 2000
Page 4

GC-8

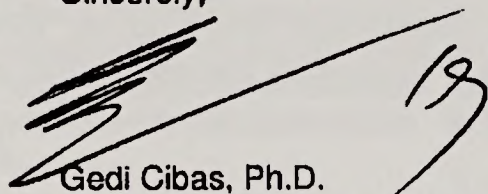
The last paragraph in Section 4.6 (Cumulative Impacts), p. 4-28, refers to the Soil Conservation Service. It is now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

References

1. Kauffman, J.B. et al. 1997. An ecological perspective of riparian and stream restoration in the western United States. Fisheries 22(5):12-24.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this document. If you have any questions on the above you may contact Mr. Gary Schiffmiller or Mr. Abe Franklin, from the Department's Surface Water Quality Bureau, at (505) 827-2470. Please let me know if you have any other questions on the above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Gedi Cibas", with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Gedi Cibas, Ph.D.
Environmental Impact Review Coordinator

NMED File No. 1334(2)ER

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to GC-8:

Thank you for your comment; a correction has been incorporated in Appendix A of Volume 1 of the FEIS (the Addendum to the DEIS).

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/26/2000 01:05:40 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Cindi Byrns
Address: 12555 E. Los Reales Rd.
City: Tucson
State: AZ
Zip: 85747
Phone: 520-720-2114

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

I have lived in Nevada for the past 12 years, only recently having moved to Arizona. I was involved with the Ely and Elko District offices in programs that effectively worked with ranchers to restore riparian habitats. I am a firm believer that this can occur through cooperation that does not necessarily preclude the use of cattle.

I was also very successful in using cattle as a part of mining reclamation. Cattle are not evil, if managed correctly they can be a useful tool.

Thank you, Cindi Byrns

Remote_Addr: 209.181.123.70
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HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

CB-1

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CB-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for continued livestock grazing is noted.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/29/2000 04:55:50 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office

Name: Bob Brister
Address: PO Box 2808
City: Oakhurst
State: CA
Zip: 93644
Phone: (559) 641-7427

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office

Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery. In my opinion, public lands should be used primarily for ecological protection, restoration, and non-destructive recreation.

BB-1

BB-2

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HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BB-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to BB-2:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/29/2000 02:24:59 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

BS-1 |
Name: Bob Swift
Address: 3125 East Hemberg Drive
City: Flagstaff
State: AZ
Zip: 86004
Phone: 520-523-9178
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please support removal of cattle from grazing along riparian areas.
Ranching, which was once an important component of our economy is now an anachronism.
The nation's need for beef and cattle products can easily be met from feedlot-raised
cattle. Continuing to allow ranchers to graze cattle in sensitive habitats degrades
the environment to the benefit of a few.

Remote_Addr: 134.114.145.111
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 4.01; Windows 95)
HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: {null}

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to BS-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 01/30/2000 05:51:30 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, moore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFONM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office

Name: Lincoln Kern
Address: 7 Devon St.
City: Preston, Melbourne
State: Victoria, Australia
Zip: 3072
Phone: 61 3 9490 1434
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: Please accept my comments below regarding the management of riparian and aquatic habitats described in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The DEIS states that most of the riparian areas are in a degraded condition and will only receive little improvement by the preferred alternative. The main reason for the degradation of these areas is cattle grazing. Our precious riparian and aquatic habitats are being destroyed by a handful of ranchers with the blessing of the BLM. This needs to stop. Select alternative three which will result in the removal of livestock from all these areas and provide the quickest and most beneficial recovery.

LK-1

Having experienced streams degraded by uncontrolled livestock throughout two partially dry and arid continents (North America and Australia), I know it is important to keep stock off for the health of the environment and the economy, clean water supports jobs in industry and tourism...

LK-2

Remote_Addr: 203.108.56.36
HTTP_User_Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 5.0; Windows 95; DigExt)
HTTP_REFERER: http://sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
HTTP_From: (null)

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to LK-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

Response to LK-2:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

1553 Brookvale Drive #1
San Jose, CA 95129
February 2, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM, Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore:

**DRAFT EIS FOR THE "RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN":
ADOPT ALTERNATIVE 3**

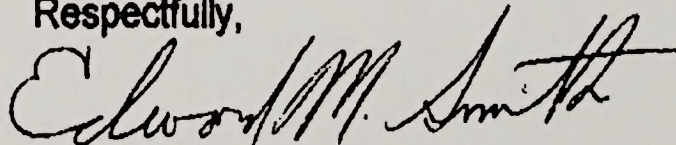
I commend you and the staff at the Farmington Field Office for your initiative to restore the ecology of streams and environmentally sensitive areas on federal public lands under your jurisdiction.

EMS-1

I strongly urge that the BLM adopt **ALTERNATIVE 3** of the Draft EIS for the "Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan." That alternative will exclude grazing by domestic livestock in riparian areas. The presence of cattle is incompatible with the ecological health of those areas and with maintaining the diversity of plants and animals that depend upon them. We can best restore sensitive riparian and aquatic areas with the permanent removal of cattle.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my comments.

Respectfully,



Edward M. Smith

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to EMS-1:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc. 1.

CHAPTER 1

200 FEB 10 PM 1:34

070 FARMINGTON, NM

13680 Page Mill Road
Los Altos Hills, CA 94022
February 5, 2000

Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM, Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway, Suite A
Farmington, NM 87401

Dear Mr. Moore,

RE: DEIS - stream and wetland protection

I strongly urge adoption of Alternative 3 of the DEIS which would remove cattle from 400 miles of streams and wetlands managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

NC-1

Protection of riparian areas is vital to survival of plant and animal species and in helping reduce soil erosion. Cattle grazing degrades riparian areas, as shown in "Cash Cows", a special San Jose Mercury News report on public land grazing, which I have enclosed.

Cattle grazing is, therefore, incompatible with good environmental management of riparian areas.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Nancy Couperus

Nancy Couperus

Enclosure: Special Report - Cash Cows

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to NC-1:

The BLM does not choose one grazing management system over another. However, periods of rest are important to plant health. The grazing system must be developed to meet the needs of the resource but also tailored to fit the livestock operation. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment. Your preference for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

February 6, 2000

Bureau of Land Management
Farmington Field Office
1235 La Plata Highway
Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401-8731

20 FEB 14 PM 4:13
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Charles R. Sands
418 W. 40th Street
San Pedro, CA 90731

My Dear Fellow Americans,

CRS-1

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my views for consideration during the review of the of the draft EIS being produced by the Bureau with regard to New Mexico's riparian and riverine areas. As the stated mandate of the Bureau of Land Management is to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the land and resources entrusted to us...based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield" (BLM), the public is entitled to a comprehensive review of the factors involved. Of primary concern to a comprehensive review of the present situation is an analysis of the impact and costs associated with the provision of federal subsidies to furnish grazing land to private cattle industry interests.

CRS-2

Historically, the federal government has maintained a close and cooperative relationship with the cattle industry. Although that relationship may have fostered a certain amount of economic growth, the long-term costs associated with this use have been inadequately estimated. While the grazing of cattle on public lands accounts for a statistically small portion of the total feed requirement of the industry, it's impact on the ecosystems affected is significant and unquestionably detrimental. Bovine grazing causes manifold insults to sensitive areas. Of these, riparian zones are perhaps the most drastically affected. Eutrophication, streamside erosion, increased sediment loading secondary to cattle crossings, and the destruction of riverine and riparian vegetation by grazing are among the most disturbing of those impacts.

The long-term destruction of riparian habitats to support this non-essential industry practice is shortsighted. What will we tell our children when they ask us why we let entire species of fish such as the Silvery Minnow wink out of existence or what is was like to sit under a big old willow down on the river bank? Will our children accept our justification that a few cattlemen were more important than their birthright? I have spent much of my life in habitats such as those which we now have the opportunity to protect and preserve. I have watched as the banks crumbled into the river grown green with scum because a few ranchers were allowed to range their herds down to the river's edge. As the endemic fish and wildlife disappear from their former home, one is led to an inescapable conclusion. We are poorer as a species for their loss.

CRS-3

From a BLM perspective, the long-term costs associated with restoring sensitive riparian areas would appear to be out of step with the marginal benefits extracted from the historic land use. Furthermore, federally subsidized cattle grazing on public lands, when endangered species are threatened, is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the Federal Endangered

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to CRS-1:

The comment reflects an opinion. Thank you for your comment.

Response to CRS-2:

The comment reflects an opinion. Thank you for your comment.

Response to CRS-3:

The HMP that is an outcome of the NEPA process will be in full compliance with the ESA. The USFWS and the BLM have conducted informal and formal consultations related to the alternatives in the DEIS as part of the section 7 process of the ESA. The HMP presented in Volume 2 of the FEIS contains numerous actions that should assist in the recovery of habitat for threatened and endangered species and other species of special concern. Your support for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc. 1.

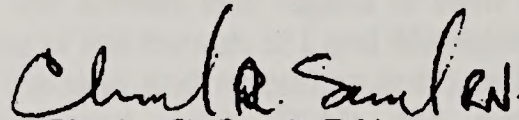
CHAPTER 1

CRS-3
(cont.)

Species Act. Therefore, I urge BLM staff to support ALTERNATIVE 3 of the Draft EIS and voice it's support for removal of cattle from 400 miles of streams and wetlands in New Mexico.

My children and I thank you for the appropriate consideration which we are certain you will give to this vital issue. We look forward to a positive and appropriate resolution to this matter, which will allow our family to continue our special relationship with this land, which does, indeed, belong to us all.

Respectfully,


Charles R. Sands R.N.

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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CHAPTER 1

February 10, 2000

Mr. Bob Moore, Project Leader
BLM Farmington Field Office-DEIS
1235 La Plata Highway, St. A
Farmington, NM 87401

200 FEB 11 PM 12:50

070 FARMINGTON, NM

Re: Draft EIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office

Dear Mr. Moore:

WRH-1 I am submitting these comments on the on behalf of myself and several neighbors that live and ranch in the Lindrith Community, above the Farmington Field Office jurisdiction area. We are acutely aware and knowledgeable regarding the Largo Canyon drainage and the conditions that affect the watershed. The Lindrith Community area has scattered tracts of BLM land and is approximately 86% private land. I think it is unfortunate that more time has not been allowed to prepare detailed comments in response to the Draft EIS. However, I understand that only a certain amount of time can be allowed for extending the comment period. I have prepared and submitted these comments for the purpose of developing a better more valid Final EIS and to maintain standing as an affected party in the process. We (landowners and lessees in the Lindrith Community) have routinely conveyed our concerns about the actions of the Farmington Field Office as they might affect us without our participation and representation; for example, moving us to the Albuquerque Office without notice and the proposed Largo Canyon Watershed Management Plan which was being developed without our input until we asked to be involved. We would again have been excluded from participation had we not learned at the last moment of the DEIS. We assume it is not intentional but it is inconvenient and demanding to comment in detail with so little time to evaluate the document and without access to the reference documents. Therefore, for the record, we do not stipulate to the validity or accuracy of the reference and source documents cited.

WRH-2 In the Summary, page S-1, I strongly agree with statement that "additional scientific data for riparian areas need to be obtained". Also, I recommend more documented monitoring and analysis of all factors be conducted to verify classification of areas and understand the entire assortment of factors that affect the areas. I contest the declaration of Largo Canyon and portions of the Carrizo as riparian areas or ephemeral streams. Subsequently the declaration of condition or trend is not possible because some of the areas are incorrectly declared to be riparian. I support Alternative 1, with some modifications similar to those suggested in Alternative2 which would require modifications in those activities and conditions that contribute to erosion, sedimentation increased runoff volume and velocities. I oppose Alternative 3 which would eliminate domestic livestock grazing but would not control grazing by big game and other wildlife. I also oppose any selection that would require changing the Farmington RMP.

WRH-3

WRH-4

WRH-5

WRH-6 The Goals and objectives described on page S-2 are adequate but #1, PFC, is impossible to achieve in an area that is not truly a riparian area. Largo Canyon and the Carrizo Canyon may have some small specific areas that are riparian in nature or are pseudo-riparian but can never achieve PFC because they do not contain permanently saturated wetlands as per the definition in the DEIS, page G-4. They are dominated by flash flooding and snow melt from areas higher in

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WRH-1:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment. The public comment period was extended to February 12, 2000 (30-day extension), in response to several requests.

Response to WRH-2:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

Response to WRH-3:

The surveys are performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits.

Response to WRH-4:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 1 (with modifications for erosion and sedimentation control) is noted.

Response to WRH-5:

Thank you for your comment. Your opposition to Alternative 3 is noted.

Response to WRH-6:

The BLM recognizes that the land it manages is often connected to adjoining lands through functions and/or processes. Management programs worked out with the adjoining landowners are generally more effective and efficient than programs designed to address only public land management or small components of public land.

CHAPTER 1

Page 2 Feb. 10, 2000
Comments on Farmington Draft EIS
By: W.R. Humphries

WRH-6 (cont.)	the drainage area. The volume and velocity of the flooding or runoff is determined by the weather event and increasingly by the thousands of miles of large surface area damaged by unmaintained and poorly designed or undesigned roads, pipelines and other unreclaimed surface damage; these are a very serious problem contributing to general degradation of the uplands and the arroyos and canyon bottoms. Until this man made problem is corrected there is little or no chance of establishing or developing lasting riparian sites in Largo or Carrizo. On page S-2 item #2, protection of wildlife and species of special concern; Big Game animals particularly elk will also need to be managed and populations balanced to the forage allocated to the elk. It is very likely that elk are an invasive species that have never occupied the majority of the habitat in the area within the DEIS previously. The same situation is true of the Barbary Sheep that were introduced to the area although that population probably was not as large as the elk and may have been extirpated, the lasting effect is unknown. Regarding species of special concern, the DEIS should not include attempts to manage for potential habitat or limit multiple use because of declaring an area as unoccupied or potential habitat. Protection of cultural resources, #3, is not meaningful in the context of cattle grazing without providing protection from big game species also. Item #4, balancing of socioeconomic impact should be considered and mitigated at the direct impact level (the affected permittee, family or lessee) first and secondarily at the broader level. It is incorrect to minimize the direct impact by applying it to the overall state or region of the state and thus dilute and disguise the damage to the directly affected parties. The principal management issues described on page S-2 are incomplete because roads, pipelines, well pads and oil and gas operations are excluded; therefore, any outcomes of the alternative strategies are condemned to failure. No erosion, riparian or upland problem can be improved, mitigated or reclaimed without addressing this problem first. The summary chart Table S.1 Environmental Impact Statement Summary Table is useful because of the limited time available for comment. I will utilize the chart for the majority of the remainder of my comments but will include some comment on each of the other sections of the DEIS. The following comments follow the organization of the Table S.1:
WRH-7	
WRH-8	
WRH-9	
WRH-10	
WRH-11	Management Approach * Should include an issue of revising the process and eliminating some areas because they are not riparian or wetland habitat and should not be included. Applies to all three alternatives. * <u>General Approach</u> , alternative 1 is correct to recommend continuation of other authorized uses, alternative 2 is too narrow and tends to exclude the fact that some of the declared areas are not riparian and should not be monitored or managed as such. Alternative #3 is presumptive and has no actual proof that the results would prove the hypothesis, it is interesting that it indicates all grazing would be eliminated from all riparian habitats, it is incorrect because you will not eliminate wildlife grazing * <u>Data Collection</u> , in Alternative 1 use of PFC will not be valid if the area measured is not a riparian area, Alt. 2 could result in unproven survey techniques being developed without proven validity, proposed techniques should be reviewed by outside professionals and affected individuals before they are implemented
WRH-12	
WRH-13	
WRH-14	

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WRH-7:

The BLM is responsible for habitat management for multiple uses. Game population management is the responsibility of the NMDG&F. When habitat degradation is caused by wildlife, the BLM makes management recommendations for addressing the problems to the NMDG&F.

Response to WRH-8:

The BLM agrees that it is better to look at the whole (holistic) picture than to look at one species. However, it must be recognized that when it comes to species protected by the ESA, focus on a single species may be required.

Response to WRH-9:

Cultural resource management within the Farmington Field Office addresses all legal and regulatory requirements for protection and preservation of cultural resources. The management of cultural resources includes an analysis of all potential threats to cultural resources on public land administered by the BLM.

Response to WRH-10:

The ranchers and other users who may be most affected by riparian management will be those currently conducting activities or practices that are not in concert with achieving PFC. To provide mitigation and to ensure the least economic impact possible, grazing programs will be developed in careful and considered consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittees, lessees, and other designated parties.

Response to WRH-11:

The BLM agrees that the cumulative effects of road construction and maintenance, pipeline construction, and other human activities that disturb soil can have an impact on watershed runoff and erosion. However, the scope of this EIS was limited to riparian habitats and activities that occur within these habitats.

Response to WRH-12:

The riparian surveys are performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits. All riparian areas listed in the DEIS were surveyed using these survey methods. Ongoing monitoring will be used to update riparian habitat areas.

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WRH-13:

Alternative 3 refers only to domestic livestock grazing.

Response to WRH-14:

The riparian surveys will be performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits.

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WRH-15	<p>* <u>Monitoring</u>, should be conducted on all areas of the affected environment in a consistent and a Page 3 Feb. 10, 2000 Comments on Farmington Draft EIS By: W.R. Humphries</p>
WRH-16	<p>widely accepted on site process. Drive-by or visual observation (ocular) estimation is not adequate, PFC surveys will not work for areas that are not riparian. Monitoring must include uplands and the road /pipeline network as it affects runoff volume and velocity</p> <p>* <u>Measurement Endpoints</u>, the comments above apply to this section also, desired future condition cannot be obtained on a site not capable of supporting or maintaining that condition therefore impossible endpoints cannot be obtained</p>
WRH-17	<p>* <u>Riparian Developments and Restoration Activities</u>, Alternatives 1 and 2 are valid, subject to the above comments about correct classification. Alternative 3 would have limited affect because exclusion devices would not exclude grazing wildlife. Restoration activities could be applied in Alternative 1 as effectively as the other two</p>
WRH-18	<p>Potential Impacts Vegetation</p> <p>* <u>Riparian</u> , Alternative 1 is capable of producing desired outcomes as mentioned, Alternative 2 could be correct but only monitoring would prove the assumption, Alternative 3 is prejudicial and presumptive and should be modified</p>
WRH-19	<p>* <u>Upland</u>, Alternative 1 is incorrect, trend and condition can be improved, Alternatives 2 and 3 are correct stating that there "might be" improvement but that is uncertain and unproven</p>
WRH-20	<p>* <u>Invasive Species</u>, Alternative 1 is comprehensive and integrated with some proven results, alternative 2 the same as 1 and has an unprovable assumption that there would be a universal measurable reduction, Alternative 3 is incorrect in its prediction and unprovable it should be revised to describe possible results not reduced potential. All three sections should recognize that the most likely proven vectors for spread of invasive weeds are the roads and vehicles which will be particularly troublesome in the Farmington Field Office because of the oil and gas operations traffic which frequently moves across the entire district within short periods of time and there are already known populations of serious noxious weeds in the Farmington District.</p>
WRH-21	<p>* <u>Special Status Species</u>, In all three alternatives the Section 7 consultations should be conducted, unoccupied habitat should not be managed as if it were occupied and it is inappropriate to force permittees off of their ranch, into management changes or cuts in AUM's based on management of potential habitat as if it were occupied.</p>
WRH-22	<p>* <u>Wildlife Habitat</u>, Alternative 1 is correct and sufficient it is not complete in that other areas are improving and many if not most wildlife populations are increasing. Alternative 2 is clearly subjective and unproven, the endpoints can be reached with Alternative 1. Alternative 3 is incorrect, presumptive and biased without proof it is purely a subjective opinion not a fact and should be removed. In all three alternatives it should be stated that wildlife populations must not exceed the allocated forage and habitat or damage will occur to the riparian and upland areas. The DEIS should clearly indicate the possibility that certain species of wildlife are Invasive Species and should not be allowed to damage any range, crop, upland or riparian sites.</p>
WRH-23	<p>* <u>Soil Erosion/Deposition</u>, None of the alternatives will provide meaningful results until improvement in the roads, pipelines and well site damages are accomplished. Alternative 1 should not include the subjective phrase "some improvement" some should be omitted.</p>

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WRH-15:

The BLM has an ongoing program of site monitoring and surveillance. Project-specific surveys are performed to ensure that sites are not damaged by BLM-funded or -permitted activities.

Response to WRH-16:

The riparian surveys are performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits. All riparian areas listed in the DEIS were surveyed using these survey methods. Ongoing monitoring will be used to update riparian habitat areas.

Response to WRH-17:

Elk numbers have increased and may be reducing the livestock grazing capacity on some lands. Management objectives are established for the land on the basis of the BLM's recognition that wildlife and livestock use the land. Carrying capacities for livestock are also set on the basis of monitoring and take into account that both livestock and wildlife use the forage. If the BLM determines that the public land is not healthy because of wildlife grazing, a change in management will be required that will effectively exclude wildlife grazers such as elk.

Response to WRH-18:

Alternatives presented in the DEIS were developed through the public scoping process and reflect a range of strategies that can be used to develop a HMP.

Response to WRH-19:

Alternatives presented in the DEIS were developed through the public scoping process and reflect a range of strategies that can be used to develop a HMP.

Response to WRH-20:

The alternatives presented in the DEIS were developed through the public scoping process and reflect a range of strategies that can be used to develop a HMP. Management of invasive weeds is a component of all three alternatives.

Response to WRH-21:

The Section 7 process of the ESA is a component of all the alternatives presented in the DEIS. The BLM agrees that it is better to look at the whole (holistic) picture than to look at one species. However, it must be recognized that when it comes to species protected by the ESA, focus on a single species may be required.

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Response to WRH-22:

The alternatives presented in the DEIS were developed through the public scoping process and reflect a range of strategies that can be used to develop a HMP. The BLM is responsible for habitat management for multiple uses. Game population management is the responsibility of the NMDG&F. When habitat degradation is caused by wildlife, the BLM makes management recommendations for addressing the problems to the NMDG&F.

Response to WRH-23:

The HMP (Volume 2 of the FEIS) addresses the issues of oil and gas development.

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Comments on Draft Farmington EIS
By: W.R. Humphries

- WRH-24 * Water Quality and Quantity, Improvements can occur in each alternative. The statement in Alternative 3 is incorrect because sediment loads in the watershed are more the result of surface disturbance and natural erosion than livestock grazing. If all of the livestock in the Largo watershed were removed the sediment loads would remain the same or increase because of the damages and accelerated runoff caused by surface damaged from roads, pipelines and other disturbances. The sedimentation and flooding will always travel down the arroyos and damage or destroy vegetation in the path and on the edges of the floods.
- WRH-25 * Livestock Grazing
Allotments: Alternative 1 should be given time to allow for additional monitoring of improvements, Alternative 2 could enhance improvement but could be interpreted to as favoring grazing practices that would force permittees to move off, cease operation or unnecessarily cut their AUM's, Alternative 3 is clear there would be cuts with no clear description of how the ranch would cope with the removal of an area from grazing. Additional language must be added to this section to describe how the exclusions will be made without displacing the permittee.
Grazing Treatments: Alternative 1 will work without causing harm and great hardship to the ranch unit and permittee, Alternative 2 is speculative indefinite although the actions could be incorporated into Alternative 1, Alternative 3 is narrow and cannot prohibit wildlife grazing even though it states it would.
- WRH-26 * Oil, Gas and Mineral Development, management actions and stipulations must be designed, implemented and enforced to complement the action items in each Alternative and the adverse effects of some sites, roads and locations must be reduced, reclaimed or mitigated in order to realize results under any of the alternatives.
- WRH-27 * ACEC's and SMA's, I recommend that some special areas and projects like the upper Palluche be developed, completed and monitored as controls for endpoint evaluations
- WRH-28 * Social and Economic, this Issue/Action Item should be separated from recreational and should be evaluated at the individual lessee or permittee level instead of regional or statewide.
- WRH-29 * Recreation, In each alternative recreation actions and impacts would need to be evaluated in the realm of the site and the other resources for instance if elk are damaging a riparian area or wetland then perhaps hunting would need to be used as a control mechanism or fence enclosures and hunting combined to provide recreation and protection simultaneously.
- WRH-30 * Land Exchanges, No private landowners should be forced to exchange riparian areas to BLM, therefore, "would be acquired when necessary" should be changed to may be acquired.
- WRH-31 * Water Withdrawals, Additional development of upland water would attract livestock and wildlife to new watering points which could also slow runoff and decrease erosion in certain areas.
- WRH-32 * Environmental Justice: Small and minority grazing permittees could be adversely affected by alternatives 2 and 3.
- WRH-33 * Cultural and Paleontological Resources, Even if all wildlife and livestock were removed protection of resources from erosion is unproven and subjective for reasons repeated frequently above. Trampling is not identified as an issue here and trampling is a equal or grater by big game.

Response to WRH-24:

Improvements in or maintenance of riparian vegetation cover are expected to reduce local soil erosion rates and decrease local deposition of sediments into stream channels, thus improving local water runoff conditions. However, as the DEIS clearly states, riparian areas under the jurisdiction of the BLM represent a small percentage of all riparian areas and a small percentage of the larger watersheds that influence water quality in the streams and rivers in the State of New Mexico. Thus, measurable changes in overall stream and river water quality within the State of New Mexico will require a cooperative effort among public and private landowners and land managers.

Response to WRH-25:

The ranching industry is not being discriminated against; all public lands (including riparian and wetland habitats) are to be improved. If public lands are degraded, the first step is to determine the causes. If an action needs to be taken to change the management or the use of the land, an appropriate action will be determined. If it is determined, for example, that the public land is not healthy because of current grazing practices, a change in management of livestock would be required. If it is determined that the public land is not healthy because of another use (e.g., recreation), a change in management of that use would be required so that the land could achieve its potential. Alternative 3 addresses the exclusion of domestic livestock grazing.

Response to WRH-26:

The HMP describes a set of riparian-area-specific data collection activities and management actions that will be implemented to restore and sustain these habitats. If roads, pipelines, other right-of-ways, elk grazing, recreation or other activities are contributing to riparian habitat degradation, these issues will be addressed at the HMP implementation stage.

Response to WRH-27:

The BLM agrees that special management areas and areas of critical environmental concern could be developed as special projects, subject to the availability of funds.

Response to WRH-28:

The ranchers and other users that may be most affected by riparian management will be those currently conducting activities or practices that are not in concert with achieving PFC. To provide mitigation and to ensure the least economic impact possible, grazing programs will be developed in careful and considered consultation, coordination, and cooperation with the permittees, lessees, and other designated parties.

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Response to WRH-29:

The comment reflects an opinion; thank you for your comment.

Response to WRH-30:

Thank you for your comment. Based on your comment, a wording change has been made; please see Appendix A of Volume 2 of the FEIS (the Addendum to the DEIS).

Response to WRH-31:

The BLM does not propose to take any private water rights in association with managing riparian and aquatic habitats. However, should a BLM management action potentially affect private water rights, actions consistent with State water laws would be taken. The development of water sources for livestock and wildlife will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Response to WRH-32:

None of the three alternatives presented in the DEIS would result in a measurable change in the total numbers of domestic livestock allowed within allotments that contain riparian habitats. Thus, there is no need to develop detailed analyses of potential socioeconomic impacts. Census information indicates that minorities are not overly represented in the ranching community (e.g., the minority composition of ranchers is less than the minority composition for the respective county population). Therefore, environmental justice is not an issue.

Response to WRH-33:

Cultural resource management within the Farmington Field Office addresses all legal and regulatory requirement for protection and preservation of cultural resources. The management of cultural resources includes an analysis of all potential threats to cultural resources on BLM-administered lands.

CHAPTER 1

Page 5 February 10, 2000

Comments on Draft Farmington EIS

By: W.R. Humphries

- WRH-34 In section 2, ALTERNATIVES part 2.0, Introduction the statement is made that "Each alternative is capable of accomplishing the proposed action to restore and protect riparian habitats on lands under BLM jurisdiction." I agree and again recommend that Alternative 1: Current Management, be selected and make the necessary adaptations from Alternative 2 on site specific basis if monitoring indicates need. Alternative 3: Grazing Management should not be utilized, it is based more on subjectivity and assumptions than proven management methods. Section 2.5, Alternatives and Issues Considered But Eliminated From Detailed Analysis, page 2-14, although dispersed recreation may have limited impacts it is grossly incorrect to not include oil and gas operations and development in the detailed analysis. The premise in the second column on page 2-14 that "these impacts are small relative to impacts from livestock grazing" is incorrect and lacks any reference to proof, research or documentation. To the contrary, the same paragraph states that the indirect impacts such as increased erosion and sedimentation might occur because of development outside of the riparian areas; that is correct and yet fails to recognize the extent and pervasiveness of the damage caused by problem roads, pipelines and other damaged sites. The entire DEIS is flawed by this omission and this issue should be included in detail in the final EIS.
- WRH-35
- WRH-36 In Section 3, DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, beginning on page 3-1, I have indicated previously that my comments focus on Largo Canyon and its tributaries, It must be noted that there are over 600,000 acres of drainage area above the Farmington Districts Eastern Boundary, as mentioned in 3.1.2 Topography, the extreme topographic relief causes longer rights-of-way and thus more runoff volume and velocity and thus more damage. The combination of the steep terrain, impervious rock and heavy soils combined with the huge area of drainage east of the area of consideration create an area of heavy flooding and extreme runoff which are forced through the narrow portion of the Largo Canyon which intensifies the natural impacts and precludes much of the Largo Canyon and its tributaries from being anything but a natural flood channel and they certainly are not a riparian area or ephemeral stream. In 3.1.3 Climate, page 3-4, the narrative is not correct for the higher area that feeds the Largo, Tapacitoes and Carrizo. There is normally a large portion of the runoff fed by snow melt and the localized thunderstorms both of which create intense runoff events which are increased in volume and intensity by the oil and gas production surface damages. The sub surface geology varies greatly in the Largo and its tributaries, impervious layers close to the surface cause the natural drainage events to bring water to the surface until the more coarse and permeable materials finally drain out. The time that requires depends on the amount of precipitation feeding the runoff and the intensity of the event. To declare and define this process and its temporary results as wetland, riparian area, or intermittent stream is incorrect. The Largo and its tributaries more closely resemble the definition on page G-5 , "these areas generally cannot , nor do they have the potential to maintain riparian vegetation". By definition in the DEIS most of Largo and its tributaries should be excluded from the document, only very small and limited areas could sustain the subsurface water and vegetation for any time long enough to prove themselves as riparian, these small areas can be addressed and managed in a manner that will not require actions other than Alternative 1.
- WRH-37
- WRH-38

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to WRH-34:

Thank you for your comment. Your support for Alternative 1, with potential management adaptations, is noted.

Response to WRH-35:

The BLM agrees that the cumulative effects of road construction and maintenance, pipeline construction, and other human activities that disturb soil can have an impact on watershed runoff and erosion. However, the scope of this EIS was limited to riparian habitats and activities that occur within these habitats.

Response to WRH-36:

The commenter is correct in noting that riparian areas are intimately connected to larger watersheds and runoff events. However, on the basis of the BLM riparian surveys (performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits), the designated riparian areas of Largo Canyon shown in the DEIS will continue to be managed as riparian habitat.

Response to WRH-37:

The narrative in Section 3.1.3 of the DEIS is intended to reflect the climatological environment characteristic of northwestern New Mexico. Obviously, localized precipitation patterns will cause local variations in runoff.

Response to WRH-38:

The commenter is correct in noting that riparian areas are intimately connected to larger watersheds and runoff events. However, on the basis of the BLM riparian surveys (performed according to the direction provided in the BLM 1737 series of riparian management guidance for PFC characterization site visits), the designated riparian areas of Largo Canyon shown in the DEIS will continue to be managed as riparian habitat.

CHAPTER 1

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Comments on Draft Farmington EIS
By: W.R. Humphries

WRH-39 | Section 4.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS, this section still does not adequately recognize the cumulative effects of all of the roads, pipelines and other surface disturbances combined with all other uses and ownerships. It states correctly that "human disturbances act in a synergistic fashion. Natural disturbances often further confound changing land conditions. The combined influences of geology, climate, soil, vegetation and water runoff often create unstable conditions even without livestock" that statement defines the complexity of the issue and also helps explain why a no grazing or anti grazing attitude serve no constructive purpose. This also reinforces that the more disturbances that exist the greater the cumulative impact. This section requires much more work, research and data. In part 5, CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION, SECTION 5.1 ON PAGE 5-1, I did not receive the scoping summary or the Draft EIS, despite previous correspondence, comments on the Largo Canyon Watershed Planning project and verbal requests to be informed. In section 5.3, Agencies and Organizations Consulted, pages 5-1 and 5-2 it is very revealing and apparently intentional that no local, state, national or regional livestock organizations or associations were included. This exclusion reinforces the perception that there is an anti-grazing bias in the language of the document. This should be corrected by actively revising the document in coordination and consultation with organizations, associations and individuals representing livestock grazing. That would help produce a more accurate and balanced document.

WRH-40 |

WRH-41 |

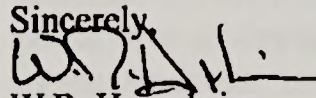
WRH-42 |

WRH-43 | Additionally I recommend some of the following practices on a large scale within the area of consideration and the area between the Farmington Field Office east boundary and the Continental Divide:

- * large scale sagebrush treatment (chemical and burning)
- * aggressive noxious weed controls
- * comprehensive effort to reclaim and repair roads, pipelines and other damaged sites
- * reseeding when possible and reasonable
- * construction of erosion control structures
- * construction of non conventional structures to slow main channel flows
- * large scale resloping and reseeding of vertical banks

These recommended treatments would need to be done on Jicarilla and Navajo Tribal Land and/or Tribal ranches that may not be Trust Land. It would also be beneficial if volume purchases or contracts were open to participation by private land owners and individual tribal allotment owners.

This concludes my comments, I believe this document or the Draft could have been made better with more outside participation in the preparation. Please consider that in the preparation of the Final EIS.

Sincerely,

W.R. Humphries
PO Box 108
Lindrieth, NM 87029

Response to WRH-39:

The BLM agrees that the cumulative effects of road construction and maintenance, pipeline construction and other human activities that disturb soil can have an impact on watershed runoff and erosion. However, the scope of this EIS was limited to riparian habitats and activities that occur within these habitats.

Response to WRH-40:

The BLM is presently discussing the development of Ecological Site Descriptions in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Services and other rangeland institutions in New Mexico. The site descriptions are expected to include elements that the BLM will use for interpretation of the standard (e.g., ecological processes, protection of the site from accelerated erosion, and thriving native plant and animal populations). Through this approach, the BLM can ensure that its foundation for land management is based on sound science and includes peer review.

Response to WRH-41:

The mailing list has been updated to include all DEIS public participants.

Response to WRH-42:

All agencies, organizations and citizens were allowed to participate in this NEPA process. All comments and public input were treated with equal consideration. The BLM is solely responsible for the content of the DEIS and the FEIS.

Response to WRH-43:

The commenter makes a number of excellent recommendations for specific actions that can be applied to individual riparian areas.

FOREST GUARDIANS



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RE: Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan and Draft EIS's

Dear Sirs and Ms. Herrera:

Introduction

I write to provide both general and specific comments on each of the above mentioned plans. In general, I think the plans are an excellent way to inform the general public about the status and condition of riparian habitats on BLM lands in New Mexico. Frankly, I think the BLM and the public would be served quite well if the agency produced a similar document for each BLM field office in the western United States. The documents are accurate, with informative maps and graphs and provide a condensed and easily readable product. I also believe the EIS's provide—better than all the somewhat random individual documents the BLM has produced on the subject—a solid foundation upon which the agency can be held accountable to itself and the general public. Protecting and restoring riparian wetland communities is one of the agency's most essential tasks.

NEPA Concerns

1. The Need For Additional Alternatives

First of all, the EIS's present a clear bias in favor of the BLM's preferred alternative that unnecessarily and inappropriately undermines choosing Alternative 3, which is essentially the no-grazing alternative. As each of the DEIS's candidly admit, "streams that are permanently protected from grazing have the highest probability of successful recovery." Furthermore, each EIS also states "some have suggested that livestock can be used as a 'tool' in riparian enhancement [however] there is no ecological basis to indicate that livestock grazing, under any management strategy, can accelerate riparian recovery more rapid than total exclusion." Despite this admission, the BLM still is choosing to allow livestock grazing simply to accommodate a few livestock permit holders.

Although the BLM claims its goal for its riparian/wetland program is "to restore and protect riparian and associated habitats" that it manages, it is obvious that the selection of Alternative 3 is the only strategy which ensures meeting that goal. One way the BLM undermines selecting Alternative 3 as a credible alternative is to strip it of many of the positive elements that are included in Alternative 2, which aside from the Las Cruces field office, is the BLM's preferred alternative. For example, elements included in Alternative 2 but inexplicable not included in Alternative 3 include: the development of explicit goals for which progress can be measured by a set of specific endpoints; and sampling to "provide quantitative results to support defensible decision-making." If these substantive elements were included in Alternative 3 it would provide each of the decision makers with a legitimate alternative that would allow the BLM to best meet its mandate under the Federal Lands Policy Management Act (FLPMA). We believe the BLM

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JCH-1

Response to JCH-1:

Alternative 3, Grazing Management, was developed in response to the public scoping comments that stated that domestic livestock grazing is an inappropriate use of riparian areas and should not be allowed to occur at any time. The introductory discussion of alternatives in Chapter 2 of the DEIS pointed out that each of the alternatives is capable of accomplishing the objectives of protecting and improving riparian habitats under BLM jurisdiction. In addition, other land management activities would continue within the BLM field offices regardless of which alternative is selected for the management of riparian areas. These other management activities include application of the guidance provided in BLM *Manual Transmittal Sheet: 1737 – Riparian-Wetland Area Management* (BLM 1992b) and TRs 1737-3 and 1737-5 through 1737-15, which specifically apply to riparian area management practices (BLM 1989; 1990; 1992a,c; 1993a,c; 1994a,b; 1996a,b; 1997; 1998). While the application of that guidance is detailed in the overall context of adaptive management in the description of Alternative 2, the guidance would also apply to the other two alternatives. However, the distinction between Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 is one of flexibility. Alternative 2 allows for the design of allotment-specific strategies that apply to the management of domestic livestock and other activities in conjunction with a priority emphasis on riparian habitat restoration. Alternative 3 would simply exclude livestock use regardless of whether it could be accommodated consistent with riparian management objectives.

The commenter is also suggesting a new alternative (i.e., combination of Alternatives 2 and 3). The BLM is responsible for sound resource management. The FLPMA directs the BLM to manage resources for multiple uses, and livestock grazing is one of the multiple uses. The new alternative would require additional time and funding to develop and analyze; however, that alternative does not appear to be consistent with the mandates of the FLPMA nor with historical land management practices of the BLM. Normally, the BLM does not stop activities, but rather adjusts the activities so that management objectives can be achieved.

CHAPTER 1

JCH-1
(cont.)

should create an additional alternative, Alternative 4, which combines the best elements of Alternatives 2 and 3.

While each of the DEIS's provides a cursory discussion of the overall importance of watersheds to the functioning and health of riparian ecosystems, each ultimately fails to propose any management for uplands to ensure riparian recovery. This is unacceptable. As the BLM itself admits, riparian communities are inextricably linked to their surrounding uplands. There is a library full of scientific literature supporting the notion that riparian communities can not be managed independent of their watersheds. One of the best literature reviews of this subject is entitled "Improving Southwestern Riparian Areas Through Watershed Management," a US Forest Service General Technical Report, by Larry DeBano and Larry Schmidt.

I will share one brief section from that review which summarizes the need to include watershed management as a scientifically defensible part of any riparian management plan:

In summary, healthy riparian areas reflect sound watershed conditions. Riparian areas provide the final natural treatment of watershed flows to filter sediments, remove nutrients, control water temperatures, and regulate base and flood flows. These areas must be considered in a watershed context, because all tributary effects accumulate to influence riparian health and stability. Upland watersheds in good condition absorb storm energies, regulate storm flows through the soil mantle, and, as a result, provide stability to the entire watershed. This, in turn, provides sustained flows necessary for supporting healthy riparian ecosystems. In contrast, abused watersheds have developed expanded channel networks in response to increased surface flows. These networks maintain undesirable flashy runoff and available sediment.

JCH-2

Despite the clear interdependence of riparian health on watershed condition, the riparian management plans and DEIS's have proposed nothing with respect to the watersheds surrounding BLM managed riparian areas. While many riparian areas the agency manages "are often only a small part of a larger area under other jurisdictions, over which the BLM has not management responsibility or authority," that does not excuse the BLM's neglect with respect to this critical issue. As the Farmington DEIS states: "BLM riparian areas are affected by the activities and quality of the watershed, and the health of the riparian area would contribute to the present conditions of the watershed, depending on the size, structure and location of the riparian area." Despite this clear admission nowhere is there a discussion of what watershed actions the BLM plans to take to ensure and expedite recovery of the riparian wetland ecosystems it does manage."

Furthermore, there are numerous watersheds such as the upper Rio Puerco, where the agency does, in fact, manage a large part of the surrounding watershed. As an example, as long as intermittent, ephemeral and dry washes in the Rio Puerco basin continue to be degraded and unstable, the proposed management actions in the Albuquerque Field Office Plan will not result in the full recovery of those riparian communities. The same is true to a lesser extent with numerous other watersheds/riparian communities where the BLM owns a significant portion land surrounding the riparian community.

We believe the BLM has a clear obligation to present an additional alternative, which addresses the need for an integrated approach to watershed/riparian management in order to manage exclusively for healthy riparian communities. The BLM's rhetoric in all of the agency riparian manuals clearly identifies the connection between watershed and riparian communities so silence on this matter in this matter is in an unacceptable circumstance.

2. Riparian Communities Excluded

In order for the public and the decision-maker to be accurately, the BLM must rely on the best available information. Each of the DEIS's inexplicably and unjustifiably has excluded numerous riparian communities. We find this very disconcerting, especially in light of the limited number of riparian/wetland communities that the agency manages.

JCH-3

Albuquerque Field Office

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JCH-2:

While there is no question that the upland portions of watersheds relate to the condition and function of the riparian elements of those watersheds, the scope of the EIS was focused on the riparian areas under the jurisdiction of the BLM. Moreover, management strategies that are subsequently designed and implemented for the uplands would emphasize riparian habitat protection.

Response to JCH-3:

As additional wetland areas, including the ones mentioned in the comment, come to the attention of the BLM, they will be assessed for their riparian habitat values and, as appropriate, will be incorporated into the HMP.

The number, scope and type of riparian/wetland communities excluded from the Albuquerque Field Office is the greatest. This could be due to the fact that we know the riparian communities best in this portion of the state. The following is a list of riparian communities not addressed in the EIS:

- Numerous playa lakes within and adjacent to the El Malpais National Conservation Area.
- Las Huertas Creek near the Santa Ana Pueblo and the community of Placitas.
- Various stretches along the main stem of the Rio Puerco, especially above and below the confluence with the Arroyo Chico.
- Peralta Canyon near Tent Rocks.
- Seccion Arroyo above the confluence with the Arroyo Chico.
- Rio Senorito above the 4 currently excluded areas and a perennial tributary.
- An intermittent tributary to the Rio Senorito.

In addition to the specific areas identified above we are stunned that the BLM chose to exclude numerous riparian areas that are in between riparian enclosures. These areas may be horribly overgrazed as I can attest after a recent visit to Senorito Creek, but they are nevertheless riparian habitats. I do not understand how the agency could exclude these areas from its list of riparian habitats.

Furthermore, after seeing places like Senorito Creek and a tributary stream to it excluded from the list, I simply wonder whether there are other similar areas the BLM has excluded. There is no doubt the BLM is aware of many of these riparian areas. However, it appears that identifying them in these riparian management plans would mean the BLM would be held accountable for their future management. I urge you to include these and all other riparian areas in the next version of these plans.

JCH-3
(cont.)

Las Cruces Field Office

The arbitrarily defined EIS boundary identified by the Field Office excludes numerous riparian communities on the east side of the Black Range and the west side of the Sacramento Mountains. While the BLM may believe that the scope of the DEIS's is to mirror the FWS biological opinions, we are not aware of this limitation. It would be a far more valuable document to the public and the agency itself if all riparian areas within the Field Office were included. Notwithstanding the above concerns, we are aware of 1 riparian community not addressed in the EIS.

- Old oxbow wetlands along the west bank of the Rio Grande 10 miles north of Las Cruces.

Taos Field Office

The Taos Field Office appears to have similarly excluded inclusion of riparian habitats along the Rio Grande and Rio Chama. We are aware of no justification or foundation for doing so. As stated above, we believe the document would be far more valuable if it is more inclusive.

Farmington Field Office

Unfortunately, we are unfamiliar with much of the public lands managed by the Farmington field office and thus are unable to offer constructive input about the adequacy and scope of the identification of riparian communities. We hope your list is inclusive.

Federal Lands Policy Management Act Concerns

The BLM's over-riding mandate with respect to any and all activities that it undertakes is to ensure that the agency pursues land management activities in a "combination [of uses] that will best meet the present and future needs of the American people" with a consideration to "the relative value of the resources." Notwithstanding the fact that each of the DEIS's clearly states this mandate (sec 2.4), there is absolutely no

JCH-4

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JCH-4:

The BLM agrees with your comment that the economic benefits of properly functioning riparian habitats are significant and has addressed those benefits in the HMP included in the FEIS.

CHAPTER 1

discussion of the relative values of the riparian resources. For this reason, we believe the BLM's draft riparian management plans violate the substantive mandate of FLPMA.

There is no question that riparian communities are one of the most, if not the most, valuable assets the agency manages. The DEIS's each recognize the benefits of naturally functioning riparian ecosystems, not only for fish and wildlife, but also for water quality, flood control, recreation and other human-oriented benefits that are unrelated to livestock production. With that in mind, it is inexcusable for the BLM not to consider which of the proposed alternatives in the DEIS's best meets the needs of the American people considering the relative value of the resources.

JCH-4
(cont.)

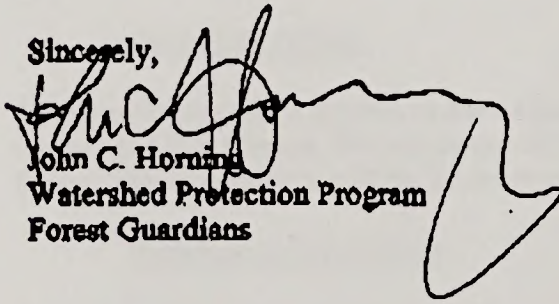
The DEIS's do an adequate job of addressing the small economic impact of pursuing the no-grazing alternative as it would adversely affect livestock production, but utterly fail to address the economic benefits of the no-grazing alternative. For example, the Albuquerque DEIS states: "because of the limited amount of land made inaccessible, couple with continued access to vast amounts of other public lands for grazing, this impact is expected to be negligible." (p. 4-39) In the case of the Farmington field office, the DEIS clearly shows that even when including the entirety of allotments that have any riparian habitat, a no-grazing alternative would effect a mere "840 head of livestock." (p.3-12) Despite these admissions of the relatively small adverse effects to livestock production of implementing the no-grazing alternative or for that matter the adaptive management alternative, there is no discussion of the economic benefits of a restored stream in terms of improved water quality, reduced flood damage, and greater fish and wildlife. The DEIS's are each fatally flawed without a more thorough discussion and analysis of the economic benefits of the no-grazing alternatives. Only with this information in hand, can the American public and the decision-maker make an informed decision about which alternative best meets the needs of the American people.

Conclusion

JCH-5

After reviewing each of the DEIS's it is clear that the documents are just that—drafts. We sincerely hope that you go back to the drawing board to make the plans more accurate and more informative. Finally, we also believe that Alternative 3—the no-grazing alternative is the one that best fits the needs of New Mexico residents and all Americans. Streams and wetlands are precious resources that should be managed to protect publicly valued resources such as clean water, fish and wildlife and recreational and aesthetic values. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions about these comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


John C. Hornung
Watershed Protection Program
Forest Guardians

DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to JCH-5:

The BLM appreciates your comments and the others that it has received on the DEIS and has incorporated them into the FEIS and the HMP. The BLM believes that the selection of Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, will result not only in protection, but in significant improvement, of the riparian habitats included in the scope of this document.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 02/11/2000 03:06:24 PM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: Yung Huang
Address: 1005 W. Peltason Dr. Apt G
City: Irvine
State: CA
Zip: 92612
Phone: (949)854-3753

Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: I suggested the alternative 3 of the DEIS. Cattle shouldn't be allowed to graze near any streams or wetlands. Most of wetlands and streams provide a habitat for many of the migrating and local organisms, and prevent flooding or soil erosion. If we allowed the cattle to freely graze on these valuable lands, it definitely will destruct a natural habitat. It will also destroy natural mean of controlling soil erosion and flood controls. Obviously, lots of private companies bought the land from government to allow livestock to graze freely. This is a very common phenomenon worldwide. Making profit is the primary goal for the entire corporations. For economic purpose, these people have long exploited the legal loophole to damage the natural habitat. Of course, these damages in the nature habitat are irreversible. The role of natural habitat is being able to fight for flood and soil erosion when natural disasters happen. Once it has been damaged, its function of nature role will be lost.

YH-1

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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to YH-1:

The BLM acknowledges that livestock grazing has occurred for many years on the majority of BLM public land, most of which is in sustainable condition. Grazing in riparian areas is subject to monitoring to determine whether riparian health is being maintained. Where grazing is contributing to resource degradation, the BLM will take action to modify management of the allotment. Your preference for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1



Public Comment <swcbd@sw-center.org> on 02/11/2000 08:36:12 AM

To: gis@sw-center.org, rmoore
cc: (bcc: Robert Moore/FFO/NM/BLM/DOI)
Subject: Comments DEIS Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
:

Name: KUSH LALWANI
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City: IRVINE
State: CA
Zip: 92612
Phone: (949)509-9451
Subject: Comments for DEIS for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat: Farmington Field Office
Comments: To Whom It May Concern:

KL-1

I recommend alternative 3 of the DEIS. Cattle should not be allowed to graze near any streams or wetlands. Many wetlands and streams provide a habitat for many of the migrating and local organisms, and prevent flooding or soil erosion. By allowing the cattle to freely graze on these valuable lands, not only are we destructing a natural habitat, but also a natural mean of controlling soil erosion and flood controls. It has been no secret that a corporation could purchase land from the government and allow its livestock to graze about freely. By lobbying for the privilege to purchase lands and use it entirely for selfish economic purposes, the private corporations have long exploited this legal loophole and caused irreversible damage to the environment. What is being taken away is not only the aesthetic beauty nature has to offer, but also nature's defense against erosion and flooding. From an economist's point of view, livestock are expendable; natural resources are not. A lives

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HTTP_REFERER: http://www.sw-center.org/swcbd/activist/blmfarm.html
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DEIS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Response to KL-1:

The sale or exchange of public land is controlled by a strict set of laws and regulations that include extensive environmental reviews. Your preference for Alternative 3 is noted; see the response to Misc.1.

CHAPTER 1

1.4 REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 1

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1997, *Grazing Management for Riparian-Wetland Areas*, TR 1737-14, U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM National Applied Resource Sciences Center, Denver, Colo.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1998, *A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lotic Areas*, TR 1737-15, U.S. Department of the Interior, BLM Service Center, Denver, Colo.

U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1999, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico*, U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office, Farmington, N.M., Oct.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1997, *Biological Opinion on the Effects from Continued Implementation of the Bureau of Land Management's Resource Management Plan for the Farmington Field Office*, Albuquerque, N.M., April.

USFWS: See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2 DESCRIPTION OF HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of the HMP presented in Volume 2 is to provide guidance for the restoration and protection of riparian and aquatic habitats under the jurisdiction of the BLM in the Farmington Field Office, New Mexico. The management goals are to maintain, restore, improve, protect, and expand riparian areas so that they are in PFC for their productivity, biological diversity, and sustainability. These goals will be accomplished when all designated riparian areas are in PFC, and all threatened and endangered species habitat requirements have been established.

Although the BLM has been actively managing riparian habitats in pursuit of this goal for over a decade, the need to place special emphasis on these important resources was triggered by legal action against the BLM. The

lawsuit was settled when BLM agreed to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office, including a HMP. The HMP is not specifically intended to be implemented under the authority of the Sikes Act. In addition, the management strategies provided in the HMP would apply to subsequently identified riparian, wetland, and spring/seep areas under BLM jurisdiction in the Farmington Field Office.

The development of a HMP based on Alternative 2, Adaptive Management, allows the Farmington Field Office to implement a set of management actions specific to each riparian area following a common management strategy, the primary goal of which is the restoration and protection of riparian and aquatic areas.

APPENDIX A:

ADDENDUM TO THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE DRAFT EIS

APPENDIX A:

ADDENDUM TO THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE DRAFT EIS

APPENDIX A:
ADDENDUM TO THE FARMINGTON
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APPENDIX A:

ADDENDUM TO THE FARMINGTON FIELD OFFICE DRAFT EIS

This addendum provides corrections to the text and figures of the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (DEIS). It also provides additional information to supplement the DEIS.

Page S-7:

Within the Land Exchanges now under the Alternative 2 column, "... lands would be acquired ..." should be changed to "... lands may be acquired ..."

Page 3-4:

Section 3.1.3: The last sentence of the first paragraph incorrectly identifies the frost-free period. The sentence should read "The freeze-free season is generally less than 80 days and some high mountain valleys have freezes in summer months."

Section 3.1.3: The third paragraph should read "Prevailing winds are normally from the northeast to southwest at between 5 and 15 miles per hour (mph). However, frontal winds may exceed 30 mph for several hours and reach peak speeds of over 50 mph."

Page 3-8:

Table 3.2: The fifth column entry for Upper San Juan should be changed to read 13/2004.

Table 3.2: Blanco Canyon column entries should be changed as follows: TMDL Segment/Schedule: 0/-, Number of Causes for Non-Support: 0, Number of NPDES Permits: 0, and Number of Water Supply Systems: 0.

Table 3.2: Footnote "a" should read "Notes: TMDL Segment = river miles for which total maximum daily load (TMDL) analysis must be completed; TMDL Schedule = the mandatory year of completion by the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of a TMDL document describing the causes (water quality parameters) and sources (discharges and land-use activities) of non-support (causes of non-support = water quality parameters for which the water quality of TMDL segments does not support their designated uses); NPDES Permits = discharge permits issued under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES); Water Supply Systems = regulated drinking water supply systems in the watershed that depend on surface water; COE Sec. 404 Permits = the number of actions (information provided, public meetings, field inspections, and permits issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [COE]) regarding Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act; USGS Stations = U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) stream gauging stations in the hydrologic unit."

Page 3-19:

Section 3.2.1.5: The second sentence of the first paragraph should be deleted.

Page 3-42:

Section 3.2.2.6: The second sentence of the first paragraph should read "Six grazing allotments coincide with these reaches ..."

APPENDIX A

Page 4-9:

Section 4.1.1.5: The first sentence of the second paragraph should be deleted and replaced with the following: "Although sand and gravel operations are prohibited on river tracts, construction and operation (including the installation and use of roads and surface pads and facilities) can disturb downstream riparian areas."

Page 4-13:

Section 4.1.3.5: The first sentence should be deleted and replaced with the following:

"Because sand and gravel operations are prohibited on river tracts, there are no direct adverse impacts from these activities on paleontological and cultural resources."

Page 5-2:

Section 5.3: Under the New Mexico State Government listing, the New Mexico Environmental Department is incorrect. It should be listed as the New Mexico Environment Department.

APPENDIX B:

BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT

B-1 INTRODUCTION

B-2 Project Description and Alternatives

APPENDIX B:

BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Section 4.1.1.1 The first section of the
document is devoted to a description of the
study area. The study area is located in the
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APPENDIX B: BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT

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APPENDIX B:

BIOLOGICAL EVALUATION FOR RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT

B.1 INTRODUCTION

This biological evaluation has been prepared to analyze the potential impacts on federally listed and other special concern species from the preferred alternative identified in this *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico*. This FEIS addresses the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Adaptive Management Alternative for 16 river tracts, ephemeral streams, and wetlands within San Juan, McKinley, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties.

Seventeen federally listed, proposed, and candidate species are known to or have the potential to occur within the four counties of the Farmington Field Office area [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 1999a)]. It is BLM policy to consider state-listed and BLM-sensitive species in its planning efforts. However, the habitats required or preferred by these species may not occur within the specified riparian and aquatic habitats or associated upland allotment areas addressed in this FEIS. The potential for the presence of these species on lands that could be affected by the preferred alternative and any potential impacts on these species resulting from implementation of the preferred alternative are examined in this biological evaluation.

B.1.1 Project Description and Alternatives

The Draft EIS (DEIS) (BLM 1999c) assessed the potential impacts of three alternative management strategies developed by the BLM for protecting and restoring riparian and aquatic habitats under the jurisdiction of the Farmington Field Office. For over a decade, the BLM has emphasized the restoration and protection of streamside riparian areas for the benefit of threatened and endangered species as well as for other riparian obligate species. Each alternative considered is capable of accomplishing the proposed action of protecting and enhancing riparian and aquatic habitats. The alternatives presented in the DEIS were as follows:

- **Alternative 1: Current Management (No Action Alternative)** — Continue to manage riparian areas in accordance with applicable BLM guidance with the objective of restoring and protecting such areas in conjunction with authorizing other land management activities. Current management has already restored some riparian areas either by completely removing domestic livestock from selected riparian habitats or by implementing other management practices.

APPENDIX B

- ***Alternative 2: Adaptive Management Practices (Preferred Alternative)*** — Assign highest priority to implementing those management practices identified in current BLM management guidance to restore and protect all riparian habitats under BLM jurisdiction. This alternative would require a specific focus on riparian management; decisions regarding other land management activities would be constrained to limit or prevent any adverse impacts on riparian areas.
- ***Alternative 3: Grazing Management*** — Eliminate grazing by domestic livestock in all riparian areas by modifying grazing allotments to exclude such areas. For each allotment affected, this action would include changing the description of the allotment, installing fences or other physical barriers to prevent livestock from entering riparian areas, and, if appropriate, adjusting the number of livestock permitted to use the modified allotment.

Information presented in this FEIS underscores the fact that riparian habitats are critical, but very small, areas in relation to the large amount of land administered by the BLM. In addition, segments of riparian areas under BLM jurisdiction are often only a small part of larger areas under jurisdictions over which the BLM has no management responsibility or authority. This observation is central to gaining an appreciation for the important, but limited, role that the BLM plays in improving and protecting riparian habitats in New Mexico.

B.1.2 Species Identification

Section B.2 evaluates the federally listed threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate

species evaluated as identified by the USFWS (1999a) (Table B.1). The BLM has determined, on the basis of this biological evaluation, that the implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in the following determinations for these federally listed species: “No Effect” or “May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect” (Table B.1). No “May Affect – Likely to Adversely Affect” determinations were made for these species.

Unless referenced otherwise, much of the information presented on the life history, distribution, and habitat of the evaluated species comes from *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of New Mexico* (Sivinski and Lightfoot 1995), *BISON-M (Biota Information System of New Mexico)* (New Mexico Department of Game and Fish [NMDG&F] 1997) and references cited therein, *Federal Endangered and Threatened Plants for New Mexico* (University of New Mexico [UNM] 1997a), *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Candidate Species for New Mexico* (UNM 1997b), and *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species of Concern for New Mexico* (UNM 1997c).

B.1.3 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are the effects of future non-federal (state, local government, or private) activities on endangered, threatened, or other special concern species or critical habitats that are reasonably certain to occur in the foreseeable future. These activities include recreation, private subdivision construction, livestock grazing, resource extraction, silviculture, and road construction. An analysis of cumulative impacts for each species is given below.

TABLE B.1 Threatened and Endangered Species That May Occur within the Farmington Field Office Area

Species	Status ^a			Potential County Locations ^b	General Habitat	Effects Determination
	Federal	State	BLM			
Federally Listed						
Goodding's onion (<i>Allium gooddingii</i>)	C	E	-	M, SJ	Grassy meadows in ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forests, generally above 8,000 feet in elevation.	No Effect
Knowlton cactus (<i>Pediocactus knowltonii</i>)	E	E	-	SJ	Rolling topography in pinyon-juniper woodland openings on a single 20-acre hill near the Colorado/New Mexico border.	No Effect
Mancos milkvetch (<i>Astragalus humillimus</i>)	E	E	-	SJ	Sandstone mesas and ledges in areas of sparse pinyon-juniper woodlands.	No Effect
Mesa Verde cactus (<i>Sclerocactus mesae-verdae</i>)	T	E	-	SJ	Clay soils formed from shale formations. Usually on tops or slopes of low rolling hills with sparse vegetation.	No Effect
Zuni (= rhizome) fleabane (<i>Erigeron rhizomatus</i>)	T	E	-	M	Sandstone slopes and clay banks of Chinle shale and Baca formation outcrops at 7,300 to 8,000 feet in elevation.	No Effect
Colorado pikeminnow (<i>Ptychocheilus lucius</i>)	E(w/CH)	E	-	R, SJ	Turbid, deep, and strong-flowing waters.	May Affect - Not Likely to Adversely Affect
Razorback sucker (<i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>)	E(w/CH)	-	-	SJ	Silt- to rock-bottomed backwaters near strong currents and pools in medium to large rivers; impoundments.	No Effect
Rio Grande silvery minnow (<i>Hybognathus amarus</i>)	E(w/PCH)	E	-	S	Low-gradient, large streams with shifting sand or silty bottoms.	No Effect

TABLE B.1 (Cont.)

Species	Status ^a			Potential County ^b Locations	General Habitat	Effects Determination
	Federal	State	BLM			
Boreal western toad (<i>Bufo boreas boreas</i>)	C	E	-	R	Near springs, streams, ponds, and lakes in foothill woodlands, mountain meadows, and moist subalpine forests. In New Mexico, however, exclusively near high mountain lakes.	No Effect
American peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>)	-	T	-	M,R,S,SJ	Mountainous areas. Generally large cliffs near water and with relatively dense avian prey species.	May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect
Arctic peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus tundrius</i>)	-	T	-	M,R,S,SJ	Similar to American peregrine falcon. Riparian woodlands, forests, shrublands, and prairies (foraging habitats used during migration).	May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect
Bald eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	T	T	-	M,R,S,SJ	Generally associated with medium to large perennial streams, rivers, and other water bodies that provide an adequate prey base and appropriate nesting/roosting habitat.	May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect
Brown pelican (<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>)	E	E	-	SJ	Sea coasts; large inland waters (vagrants).	No Effect
Interior least tern (<i>Sterna antillarum athalassos</i>)	E	E	-	R	Associated with water; nests on sparsely vegetated and gravel sand bars within a wide, unobstructed river channel or alkali flats along the shorelines.	No Effect
Mexican spotted owl (<i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>)	T(w/CH)	-	-	M,R,S,SJ	Dense, multistoried forests with moderately closed to closed canopies (e.g., mature and old growth forests). Also occurs in canyon systems.	No Effect
Mountain plover (<i>Charadrius montanus</i>)	PT	-	-	S,SJ	Flat, short-grass prairies. Prefers habitat composed of large areas of bare ground and short grass.	No Effect

TABLE B.1 (Cont.)

Species	Status ^a			Potential County Locations ^b	General Habitat	Effects Determination
	Federal	State	BLM			
Southwestern willow flycatcher (<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>)	E(w/CH)	E	-	M,R,S,SJ	Riparian areas with dense stands of willows, buttonbrush, boxelder, alders, or other trees and shrubs. Associated with multilayered vegetation in close proximity to slack water.	May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect
Whooping crane (<i>Grus americana</i>)	XN	E	-	R,S	Roosts nightly at an open expanse of shallow water in rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands. Feeds in these areas and agricultural fields.	No Effect
Black-footed ferret (<i>Mustela nigripes</i>)	E	-	-	M,R,S,SJ	Associated with large prairie dog towns.	No Effect
Black-tailed prairie dog (<i>Cynomys ludovicianus</i>)	C	-	-	T	Grassland, plains, and other upland areas that have easily excavated soils.	No Effect

^a Federal column: C = candidate, E = endangered, PE = proposed endangered, PT = proposed threatened, T = threatened, w/CH = with critical habitat, w/PCH = with proposed critical habitat, XN = nonessential experimental.

^b M = McKinley County, R = Rio Arriba County, S = Sandoval County, SJ = San Juan County.

Sources: NMDG&F (1997); Pyle (1998); Sivinski and Lightfoot (1995); Struttman (1999); USFWS (1999a); UNM (1997a-c).

APPENDIX B

B.2 FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES

B.2.1 Goodding's Onion (*Allium gooddingii*)

Distribution and Ecology: Goodding's onion is found in grassy meadows in ponderosa pine and spruce-fir forests at an elevation of 8,000 feet in the Willow Creek area of the Mogollon Mountains; in spruce-fir forests at elevations of 9,400 to 11,000 feet in the Sierra Blanca Park area of the Sacramento Mountains; and at one location in the Chuska Mountains on the Navajo Reservation. It is threatened by habitat modification.

Effects Determination: The potential habitat areas identified in the Mogollon Mountains and the Sacramento Mountains are not within the Farmington District. The potential habitat identified in San Juan County is wholly contained in the Chuska Mountains of the Navajo Indian Reservation. The Farmington Field Office has no land management authority on the Chuska Mountains. Because no potential habitat for Gooddings Onion exists on lands managed by the Farmington Field Office, the BLM has determined that implementation of adaptive management practices within the Farmington Field Office would result in "No Effect" on this species. Therefore, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, private, and state activities) for this species would not change because of this action.

B.2.2 Knowlton Cactus (*Pediocactus knowltonii*)

Distribution and Ecology: This small cactus is endemic to New Mexico. It occurs in mid pinyon-juniper zone woodland openings on gravelly soils. Knowlton cactus is found on rolling topography between 6,500 and 7,500 feet in elevation and areas of relatively high rainfall (at least 15 inches per year) (BLM 1999b). The only known population is located on a single hill in northeastern San Juan County in the area of the Rio de los Pinos. Oil and gas development are the major threats to the species (BLM 1999b).

Effects Determination: This species does not occur near or within the riparian areas managed by the Farmington Field Office. Thus, the BLM has determined that riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "No Effect" for the Knowlton cactus. In addition, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species because of riparian and aquatic habitat management.

B.2.3 Mancos Milkvetch (*Astragalus humillimus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Mancos milkvetch is a perennial plant of sparse pinyon-juniper woodland on sandstone rimrock ledges and mesa tops between 5,200 and 6,000 feet in elevation (BLM 1999b). It is also found in desert scrub habitat that is often dominated by sagebrush, saltbush, winterfat, and greasewood. Its range includes southwestern

Colorado and northwestern New Mexico. The Mancos milkvetch is confined to several populations, some of which may be threatened by habitat modification related to oil and gas exploration and development. It is endangered in a portion of its range and is rare outside New Mexico. Within New Mexico, it is known only from San Juan County. A Section 6 long-term monitoring project sponsored by the USFWS documented no adverse effects due to cattle grazing (BLM 1999b).

Effects Determination: None of the specified riparian areas have habitat suitable for the mancos milkvetch. Also, no adverse effects related to cattle grazing have been identified for the species. Therefore, the BLM has determined that riparian and aquatic habitat management would have “*No Effect*” on for the mancos milkvetch. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species because of riparian and aquatic habitat management.

B.2.4 Mesa Verde Cactus (*Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Mesa Verde cactus is restricted to clay soils associated with shale and generally occurs on sparsely vegetated tops or slopes of low rolling hills. It is found in desert scrub communities generally dominated by sagebrush, saltbush, winterfat, and greasewood. Its range includes the San Juan basin of San Juan County, New Mexico, and adjacent Colorado. The Mesa Verde cactus is confined to several populations or to one extended population. It is endangered in a portion of its range and is rare outside of New Mexico. Most of the population is located on the Navajo and Ute Mountain Indian Reservations. BLM-managed lands within the Farmington Field Office area contain less than 2% of the total population of this species (BLM 1999b).

The Mesa verde cactus is threatened by habitat destruction from energy development and urbanization. It appears that grazing does not pose any immediate threat to the cactus (BLM 1999b).

Effects Determination: The Mesa Verde cactus does not occur near or within the riparian areas managed by the Farmington Field Office. In addition, livestock grazing does not appear to be a threat to the species. Thus, the BLM has determined that riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in “*No Effect*” on the Mesa Verde cactus. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, private, and state activities) for this species would not change because of riparian and aquatic habitat management.

B.2.5 Zuni (= Rhizome) Fleabane (*Erigeron rhizomatus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Zuni fleabane is associated with clay soils derived from Chinle shale formation outcrops at elevations of 7,300 to 8,000 feet in the Zuni, Datil, and Sawtooth Mountains. The habitat consists of sandstone slopes and lava flows. Except for its narrow range and very local distribution, no other threats are known for the Zuni fleabane. The closest known population to the specified riparian areas in the Farmington Field Office area is the population that occurs on Forest Service lands near Fort Wingate in McKinley County. The other known populations of the Zuni fleabane are in Catron County. Because selenium often co-occurs with uranium, this species may become threatened by habitat destruction associated with uranium mining.

Effects Determination: Because the specified riparian areas do not occur within the distribution of the Zuni fleabane or contain habitat required to support it, the BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and

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aquatic habitat management within the Farmington Field Office area would have “No Effect” on the Zuni fleabane. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office for this species.

B.2.6 Colorado Pikeminnow (*Ptychocheilus lucius*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Colorado pikeminnow evolved as the main predator in the Colorado and San Juan River systems. The diet of the Colorado pikeminnow consists almost entirely of other fish. The Colorado pikeminnow is the largest cyprinid native to North America and may grow as large as 6 feet in length and weigh nearly 100 pounds. These fish are known to be long-lived; they may live for up to 50 years.

Peak flows during the spring runoff are particularly important, since they are associated with reproductive activities of the Colorado pikeminnow. Alteration of these hydrological events may affect the start of Colorado pikeminnow migration and spawning. In addition, the maintenance of low, stable flows in summer and fall is necessary for the growth and survival of young Colorado pikeminnow.

Colorado pikeminnows are known to inhabit the San Juan River. The reach of currently known, occupied Colorado pikeminnow habitat extends from Lake Powell upstream to river mile 158.4 (Hogback Diversion). Virtually all of the land administered by the Farmington Field Office is drained by the San Juan River system. Major drainage tributaries that enter the San Juan River below Navajo Dam directly influenced by BLM management practices include Animas River, La Plata River, Pump Canyon, Gobernador Canyon, Largo Canyon, and Kutz

Canyon. The Animas River and La Plata River are perennial river systems, while the remaining canyon drainages are intermittent or ephemeral systems. All of these tributary systems contribute sediment and dissolved solids into the San Juan River. Livestock grazing along these tributaries and on the uplands throughout the district may affect the quality of the water discharged into the San Juan River.

The Colorado pikeminnow was listed as endangered on March 11, 1967 (32 FR 40001). The reasons for its decline include the fragmentation, modification, and degradation of its riverine habitat arising from dam construction and competition and predation from introduced, non-native fishes. Critical habitat has been designated within the 100-year floodplain of the Colorado pikeminnow's historical range in the following section of the San Juan River Basin (59 FR 13374):

New Mexico, San Juan County; and Utah, San Juan County. The San Juan River from the State route 371 Bridge in T. 29 N., R. 13 W., section 17 (New Mexico Meridian) to Neshahai Canyon in the San Juan arm of Lake Powell in T. 41 S., R. 11 E., section 26 (Salt Lake Meridian).

Alterations of natural hydrographs by water storage and release on the rivers inhabited by the Colorado pikeminnow continue to affect the species by changing its environmental cues for spawning and by providing a competitive benefit to non-native fishes. Changes in the temperature of flows released by the major dams within its range have rendered portions of the species' historic range uninhabitable. Habitat fragmentation resulting from the construction and operation of barriers (dams) within the range of the Colorado pikeminnow is expected to continue to threaten the recovery of the species by precluding individuals from utilizing all portions of suitable habitat.

Effects Determination: With the exception of the LaJara Drainage, all of the designated riparian areas either drain into the San Juan River or are located along the banks of the San Juan River. The implementation of adaptive management practices within the Farmington Field Office would result in the elimination of livestock grazing during the growing season in designated riparian areas and promote improvement of riparian areas to achieve proper functioning condition over time. Since the implementation of the Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management Plan (HMP) would result in improving riparian conditions on BLM managed lands in the San Juan River drainage, the BLM has determined that implementation of the plan would result in a "*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*" determination for the Colorado pikeminnow.

B.2.7 Razorback Sucker (*Xyrauchen texanus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The razorback sucker is an endemic species unique to the Colorado River Basin. It was historically abundant and widely distributed within warm water reaches throughout the basin. Historically, razorback suckers were found in the main stem of the Colorado River and major tributaries in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and Mexico. This species was once so numerous that it was commonly used as food by early settlers; commercially marketable quantities were caught in Arizona as recently as 1949.

Historical accounts within the San Juan River drainage area document that razorback suckers ascended the Animas River to Durango, Colorado, around the turn of the century.

The current distribution and abundance of the razorback sucker have been significantly reduced throughout the Colorado River system.

The only substantial population of razorback suckers remaining, made up entirely of old adults, is found in Lake Mohave; however, they do not appear to be successfully reproducing. While limited numbers of razorback suckers persist in other locations in the lower Colorado River, they are considered rare or incidental and may be continuing to decline.

In the San Juan River subbasin, small concentrations of razorback suckers have been reported in the in-flow area in the San Juan arm of Lake Powell, Utah. One adult fish was captured in the San Juan River near Bluff, Utah, in 1988. The existing scientific literature and historic accounts by local residents strongly suggest that razorback suckers were once a viable, reproducing member of the native fish community in the San Juan River drainage. Currently, the razorback sucker is rare throughout its historic range and extremely rare in the main stem of the San Juan River.

Specific information on the biological and physical habitat requirements of the razorback sucker is very limited. In general, the best habitat conditions for razorback suckers are believed to be a natural hydrograph with a large spring peak; a gradually descending limb into early summer; and low, stable flows through summer, fall, and winter. Prior to construction of large, main stem dams and the suppression of spring peak flows, low velocity and off-channel habitats were commonly available throughout the Upper Basin. The absence of these seasonally flooded riverine habitats is believed to be a limiting factor in the successful recruitment of razorback suckers in their native environment. Although razorback suckers have never been directly observed spawning in turbid riverine environments within the Upper Basin, captures of ripe specimens, both males and females, have been recorded in the Yampa, Green, Colorado, and San Juan Rivers. Outside of the spawning season, adult razorback suckers occupy a variety of shoreline and main channel

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habitats, including slow runs, shallow to deep pools, backwater, eddies, and other relatively slow-velocity areas associated with sand substrates.

The razorback sucker was listed by the USFWS on October 23, 1991 (FR 54957), as an endangered species. Causes for the decline of the razorback sucker have been identified as fragmentation of its habitat by construction of dams, manipulation of flows with attendant alterations of temperature and water quality, and the introduction of non-native fishes. Once abundant throughout the mainstem of the Colorado River and its major tributaries, the species now occupies only an estimated 25% of its historic range; where it does occur, its numbers are extremely low.

Critical habitat has been designated within the 100-year floodplain of the razorback sucker's historical range in the following section of the San Juan River Basin (59 FR 13374):

New Mexico, San Juan County; and Utah, San Juan County. The San Juan River from the Hogback diversion in T. 29 N., R. 16 W., section 9 (New Mexico Meridian) to the full pool elevation at the mouth of Neshahai Canyon the San Juan arm of Lake Powell in T. 41 S., R. 11 E., section 26 (Salt Lake Meridian).

Habitat loss and fragmentation within the occupied range of the razorback sucker continue to threaten the species. In addition, the populations of species may be at such a critically low level, with little to no recruitment, that natural repopulation of suitable habitats may not be possible. The razorback sucker is unlikely to recover from the impacts to its habitats without extensive augmentation. Such efforts are currently being implemented.

*The San Juan River Recovery
Implementation Program Summary Report*

1991–1997 (Holden and Masslich 1997) identifies the following limiting factors for the Colorado pikeminnow, razorback sucker, and other native fishes in the San Juan River:

1. “The preliminary conclusion that can be drawn is that habitats for very young Colorado pikeminnow, and perhaps razorback sucker, are the most likely limiting habitats, including eddies and pools, may be limiting for adult members of these two rare fish species.” (The document explains that habitats are limited due to the physical characteristics of the river bed and the flow levels in the river at various times of the year, which have been impacted by the construction of Navajo Dam.)
2. Nonnative fish species in the river.
3. Low population numbers.

The Summary Report discusses suspended solids as follows:

San Juan River suspended solids loads and concentrations have varied over time. Effects of this variability on native fish have not been determined, but it is generally believed that these fish are adapted to extremes and may tolerate high total suspended solids (TSS) concentrations. Although no significant information is available on the effects of sediment on the native fishes of the San Juan Basin, a considerable amount of data exist for sediment load and concentration. Most data suggest decreasing levels of suspended sediment in the San Juan Basin (Holden and Masslich 1997).

Effects Determination: On the basis of an analysis of permitted activities, the BLM has determined that implementation of the Riparian and Aquatic HMP (BLM 1998a) for the

Farmington Field Office would result in a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for the Colorado pikeminnow and the razorback sucker and designated critical habitat in the San Juan River for these fishes. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Flow levels in the river will not be changed by the implementation of the HMP factors.
- The sediment regime will not be significantly affected by implementation of the HMP. A review of the Summary Report (Holden and Masslich 1997) revealed that TSS loads typically found in the San Juan River have not been identified as a limiting factor for the continued existence of adult, spawning adult, juvenile, or larval stages of the endangered fishes.
- Water chemistry will not be significantly affected by the implementation of the HMP. Extensive water quality studies have been conducted on the river and reviewed in the Summary Report (Holden and Masslich 1997), and cattle grazing is not attributed to any negative impacts to water chemistry.
- Mechanical changes due to the implementation of the HMP will not significantly impact the endangered fishes or their habitat. Mechanical changes are generally limited to hoof action on the uplands. Any other proposed improvement projects not listed in the HMP that may entail mechanical changes will be evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

- The Summary Report links improvement of the habitat for the endangered fishes with the flows in the river. Flow levels in the river are beyond the scope of the HMP.
- Individual endangered fishes are not likely to be disrupted from breeding, feeding, or sheltering activities since the nearest spawning grounds are over 20 miles from any allotment, and because sedimentation has not been identified in the Summary Report as a limiting factor.

B.2.8 Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Rio Grande silvery minnow historically occurred throughout the Rio Grande downstream of Espanola, New Mexico; in the Pecos River downstream of Santa Rosa, New Mexico; and in lower portions of the Rio Chama (USFWS 1999b). The Rio Grande silvery minnow can now be found in the middle Rio Grande, from Cochiti Dam to the headwaters of Elephant Butte Reservoir. This area has been designated as proposed critical habitat (BLM 1999a). Water availability appears to be the main limiting factor jeopardizing the species. Irrigation operations have caused portions of the Rio Grande to dry up in recent years (BLM 1999a). Channel dewatering makes its extinction an imminent possibility. Decreases in water quality related to agricultural development and growth of cities may also be affecting the species. In addition, its confinement to small areas during low flows increases its susceptibility to predation and disease.

The Rio Grande silvery minnow occupies a variety of habitats in large, low-gradient streams with shifting sand or silty bottoms. Special requirements other than a flowing mainstream environment are not indicated for this species. It

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is believed to feed on diatoms, algae, larval insect skins, and plant material scraped from the bottom sediments.

Eggs and larvae of the Rio Grande silvery minnow are likely transported downstream from one reach of the Rio Grande to the next. Because of the presence of diversion dams, repopulation of upper reaches by adults is not possible. Therefore, this species is most common in the lowermost reaches of its current range.

The habitat for the Rio Grande silvery minnow is localized within an area for which the BLM does not administer lands or manage any of the Rio Grande waters (BLM 1999a).

Effects Determination: Most of the Sandoval County lands managed by the Farmington Field Office are on the west side of the continental divide and drain into the San Juan River. Approximately 30,000 acres of lands managed by the Farmington Field Office are located on the east side of the continental divide and drain into the Rio Grande River basin. The Rio Puerco is the closest drainage to lands managed by the Farmington Field Office and is located about 8 miles to the southwest. No designated riparian areas in Sandoval County drain into the Rio Grande River basin. The BLM has determined that implementation of the riparian and aquatic HMP would result in "No Effect" on the Rio Grande silvery minnow. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species due to this action.

B.2.9 Boreal Western Toad (*Bufo boreas boreas*)

Distribution and Ecology: In New Mexico, the boreal western toad has only been known to occur in three lakes in the San Juan Mountains

(Laguinitas, Trout, and Cajilon). This species appears to be exclusively a high-mountain form. The Farmington Field Office does not administer any public lands within the preferred habitat of this species. It is believed that the boreal western toad may have been extirpated from the state (BLM 1999a).

In portions of its range, the boreal western toad lives near springs, streams (without strong currents), ponds, and lakes in foothill woodlands, mountain meadows, and moist subalpine forests, although it is exclusively a high-mountain form in New Mexico. During the day, the toad buries itself in loose soil or in gopher and ground squirrel burrows near water. These toads will feed on almost any moving animal, although ants are the preferred prey.

Chief threats to the boreal western toad include the destruction of beaver ponds, which constituted the species' preferred habitat. Acid rain or other pollution problems may also affect the species. In addition, impacts from livestock, timber management, and human recreation may jeopardize toad populations. Competition with leopard frogs may limit the local distribution of the toad to locations where the leopard frog is rare or absent. Larvae of the boreal western toad are susceptible to predation by exotic trout.

The specified riparian, wetland, and spring/seep areas addressed in this FEIS are not the types of wetland habitat preferred by the boreal western toad. In addition, the subject areas do not coincide with the known habitats for the toad.

Effects Determination: Since the specified riparian areas do not provide preferred habitat for the boreal western toad, coupled with the probable extirpation of the toad from New Mexico, the BLM has determined that implementation of the riparian and aquatic HMP would result in "No Effect" on this species. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in

the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area on this species due to this action.

B.2.10 American Peregrine Falcon
(*Falco peregrinus anatum*)
and Arctic Peregrine Falcon
(*Falco peregrinus tundrius*)

Distribution and Ecology: In New Mexico, the American peregrine falcon breeds locally in mountainous areas and occurs in all New Mexico mountain ranges. During migration, both subspecies occur essentially statewide, but mainly west of the eastern plains. However, known records documenting the Arctic peregrine falcon are available for only Chaves and McKinley Counties. The preferred habitat for the peregrine falcon is generally large cliffs (100 to 200 feet high) near water and with relatively dense avian prey species (e.g., waterfowl, passerine birds, shorebirds). Habitat requirements typically include an inaccessible (to humans and predators) nest site, an adequate prey base, proximity to water, and isolation from human disturbances. Peregrines are found in Douglas-fir, hemlock-sitka spruce, redwood, ponderosa pine, larch/white pine, lodgepole pine, fir-spruce, aspen (hardwoods), chaparral, and pinyon-juniper forest types. Foraging habitats are varied, including riparian woodlands, coniferous and deciduous forests, shrublands, and prairies.

The main threat to peregrine falcons has been attributed to pesticide use, particularly DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane). Continuing threats include pesticide poisoning in wintering grounds, low breeding densities and reproductive isolation, lack of gene flow between populations, reduced availability of foraging habitat and avian prey, and disturbance of nesting pairs. The Arctic peregrine falcon has recovered from its previous endangered status, but because its appearance is similar to that of

the American subspecies, it will remain listed until both subspecies can be removed from the Endangered Species List.

Migratory falcons may fly over many of the riparian areas within the Farmington Field Office area and may temporarily use these areas for foraging. Riparian and aquatic habitat management to improve and protect the riparian and aquatic habitats would improve habitat conditions for the peregrine falcon's prey base.

Effects Determination: Because some of the riparian areas support a potential prey base, the BLM has determined that implementation of the riparian and aquatic habitat management identified in this FEIS would result in a "May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect" situation for the peregrine falcon. The cumulative impact associated with the "May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect" determination would be an increase in the quality of habitat to support the avian prey base for the peregrine falcon.

B.2.11 Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Distribution and Ecology: Bald eagles are usually associated with medium to large perennial streams, rivers, and other water bodies that provide an adequate prey base and appropriate nesting/roosting habitat. Outside of the major river corridors (e.g., Rio Grande), the bald eagle has been observed to only be a migrant because of the lack of such habitat (BLM 1999a). Winter and migrant populations seem to have increased in New Mexico. Mid-winter numbers averaged about 430 birds per year between 1990 and 1994. Only two pairs were known to nest in the state. Key habitat areas include winter roost and concentration areas (e.g., Navajo Lake in Rio Arriba County, Cochiti Lake in Sandoval County, the north-eastern lakes from Raton to Las Vegas, the

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lower Canadian Valley, Summer Lake, Elephant Butte Lake, Caballo Lake, and the upper Gila Basin). In San Juan County, varying numbers of bald eagles also winter along the San Juan, Animas, and La Plata Rivers (BLM 1999b). Optimal habitats include riparian and lacustrine environments where food, shelter, and potential nest sites are in the greatest supply. An area of critical environmental concern (ACEC) was established for the bald eagle in the vicinity of the Animas River and Navajo Reservoir, where 80 to 100 eagles overwinter. A total of 22 sites covering 3,840 acres are involved (BLM 1988).

Bald eagles require large trees or cliffs near water where a good supply of fish, waterfowl, or carrion is available. Jackrabbits and other mammals are also taken, especially by "dry land" eagles. These eagles most notably occur between the Pecos Valley and the Sandia, Manzano, Capitan, and Sacramento Mountains, and on the Mogollon Plateau.

Bald eagle declines were caused by pesticide-induced reproductive failure, loss of riparian habitat, and human disturbance (e.g., shooting, poisoning, and trapping).

Effects Determination: A number of the specified riparian areas are not associated with the large water bodies necessary to support the bald eagle. However, bald eagles can occur in these areas during migration or overwintering. The BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in a "*May Effect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*" situation for the bald eagle. The cumulative impact associated with the "*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*" determination would be an improvement in the quality of habitat to support wintering and/or migrating bald eagles. In particular, riparian and aquatic habitat management would improve conditions for the eagle's prey base.

B.2.12 Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Distribution and Ecology: The brown pelican breeds on sea coasts and occurs mainly as a vagrant within the inland United States. It is rare throughout New Mexico, and occurrences typically involve immature birds. All verified records in New Mexico are of solitary birds. It has been presumed that most occurrences in New Mexico involved storm-driven birds that moved inland under duress. In San Juan County, a record of the bird has been verified from the San Juan River at Bloomfield. Prey items are almost exclusively fish. Brown pelican declines were primarily related to pesticide contamination of its fish prey. Other threats include loss or disturbance of breeding areas and illegal killing.

Effects Determination: Nesting habitat for the brown pelican does not exist within the Farmington Field Office area. Also, vagrant individuals occur only rarely within San Juan County. Therefore, the BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "*No Effect*" for the brown pelican. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, private, state activities) for the brown pelican would not change due to this action.

B.2.13 Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*)

Distribution and Ecology: The interior least tern is found principally in southeastern New Mexico, in and around Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge. It is an occasional migrant to other counties in the state and would be considered an accidental migrant within the Farmington Field Office area. No occurrences of the interior least tern have been recorded in Rio Arriba County on lands managed by the Farmington Field Office. Presently, the only

known nesting population is in Chaves County along the Pecos River within the refuge.

The interior least tern is a colonial nesting shorebird. It is associated with water and spends much of its time on sand bars and playas or snatching its food from the surface of the water. It feeds primarily on fish, although it also consumes crustaceans and insects. Riverine nesting areas are sparsely vegetated sand and gravel bars within a wide, unobstructed river channel, or salt (alkali) flats along the shorelines. Channelization, irrigation, and construction of reservoirs and pools have contributed to the elimination of much of the bird's nesting habitat. In addition, recreational use of sand bars along rivers and lakes, environmental contamination, and predation have adversely affected the interior least tern. Its habitat is susceptible to unpredictable water discharge patterns below dams that could flood nesting areas and to overgrowth of brush and trees along shorelines. Adverse management practices include the creation of reservoirs, channelization, allowing altered vegetation succession, and allowing recreation on sandbars.

Effects Determination: Because the interior least tern is only an accidental migrant within the Farmington Field Office area, the BLM has determined that the implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "No Effect" on this species. No sighting or nesting records exist for the tern on lands managed by the Farmington Field Office. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, private, and state activities) for this species would not change because of riparian and aquatic habitat management.

B.2.14 Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*)

Distribution and Ecology: The Mexican spotted owl occupies mountainous areas; its

preferred habitat consists of dense, multistoried forests with moderately closed to closed canopies (e.g., mature and old growth forests). The owls have also been observed in canyon systems, which appear to provide a microclimate that is the same as or similar to that of dense multistoried forests (BLM 1999a). Mexican spotted owls use a variety of montane forest types, ranging from deciduous riparian woodlands, through pinyon-juniper, pine-oak, mixed conifer, and spruce-fir. Their breeding habitat is limited to forest communities, often late-seral-stage coniferous forests of high commercial value. Home range for a single owl averages about 1,600 acres; the home range for a nesting pair averages more than 2,090 acres. Most nest trees are selected on moderate to steep slopes at elevations ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet. Most of the owl's activities during the breeding season occur within the nest site canyons. The owl feeds primarily on mammals but also preys upon birds, reptiles, and insects. Foraging sites often include big logs, higher canopy closure, and dense areas of trees and snags. It drinks from small seeps and creeks.

The largest populations of Mexican spotted owls in New Mexico occur in the Gila National Forest in the west-southwestern portion of the state and in the Sacramento Mountains in the south-central portion of the state. Among the known locations of Mexican spotted owls throughout their range in 1990, 91% were on national forests, 4% on Indian reservations, 4% on national parks, and 1% on BLM lands. No Mexican spotted owls have been located on BLM lands managed by the Farmington Field Office (BLM 1999b).

The Mexican spotted owl is threatened by timber management practices, even-aged silviculture management practices in forest habitats, increased predation associated with habitat fragmentation, and fires. Secondary losses of habitat are due to urban and suburban expansion, water development in riparian

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corridors, agricultural development, fuelwood/oak harvest, reservoir development, and mining. Most riparian areas that have been lost or impaired in New Mexico have been at low to middle elevations. The importance of these riparian woodlands to the Mexican spotted owl is unknown, although winter use of these habitats has been documented. Also, riparian areas provide dispersal corridors between semi-isolated montane habitat regions.

Effects Determination: All lands managed by the Farmington Field Office have been evaluated for Mexican spotted owl habitat. Potential spotted owl habitat was found to be limited to heads of some canyons that supported small isolated pockets of Douglas fir stands and sandstone cliffs. All of the identified potential spotted owl habitat has been surveyed according to accepted protocol, and no Mexican spotted owls have ever been detected. All designated riparian areas have been analyzed for threatened and endangered species habitat. None of the riparian areas support potential spotted owl habitat. The BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "*No Effect*" on this species. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, private, and state activities) for this species would not change due to this action.

B.2.15 Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The mountain plover is a lowland grassland species. It prefers flat, short-grass prairie and tends to avoid taller grasses and hillsides. Suitable habitat occurs in areas often grazed by livestock. It prefers habitat consisting of large areas of bare ground and short grass (less than 4-inch-tall stubble). Such requirements are met by rangelands, prairie dog towns, disturbed areas around windmills and water tanks, and barren playas. Nests are often

located near woody plants, cow manure, rocks, fence posts, and power poles. It is territorial only during the breeding season. Territory size in Colorado is about 39.5 acres (territory size in New Mexico has not been determined). Turf farms are also inhabited during spring and fall migrations. It does not require a free water source. Mountain plovers are insectivorous and forage for prey on the ground.

Mountain plovers have been documented to prefer grazed areas over nongrazed areas for breeding. Thus, cattle grazing is not expected to have a detrimental effect on the mountain plover. The leading causes of death for nestlings are predation, poor nutrition, and disease. Mining and conversion of native grasslands to agricultural fields have had the greatest impact on mountain plover populations.

Mountain plovers are likely to occur throughout Farmington Field Office lands, particularly in the short-grass prairie regions. They have been documented to breed on BLM lands managed by the Farmington Field Office (BLM 1999b). Mountain plovers have been adversely affected by the conversion of grasslands to croplands and urban uses, prairie dog control, mineral development, and domestic livestock management.

Livestock management practices are now encouraging vegetation growth by the implementation of grazing programs that allow growing season rest and limit overall utilization levels. Such actions are helping to restore proper functioning condition (PFC) in both uplands and riparian areas. However, such actions could decrease mountain plover habitat, especially where grass may exceed the height preferred by the birds. This situation would most likely occur within riparian exclosures, which, in some cases, would also include some upland acreage (BLM 1999a). However, such exclosures are intermingled and in close proximity to grazed pastures, which provide the lower stubble height

preferred by mountain plovers. Also, livestock watering facilities offer preferred habitat. Even if livestock grazing management strategies are implemented to improve vegetative cover, a mosaic of vegetation and bare ground would still occur throughout BLM-administered lands, as well as on adjacent private, state, and Indian reservation lands (BLM 1999a).

Effects Determination: The BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would have “No Effect” on the mountain plover. The cumulative impacts presently existing (e.g., federal, state, and private activities) for this species would not change due to this action.

B.2.16 Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The southwestern willow flycatcher occurs along desert riparian habitats where dense groves of willows, buttonbrush, boxelder, alder, and other trees and shrubs occur. In some locations, exotic plants, including saltcedar and Russian olive, are also used for nesting or migratory stopovers. The species is associated with multilayered vegetation in close proximity to slack water. The surrounding vegetation in nesting areas generally ranges from 12 to 21 feet high.

The southwestern willow flycatcher occurs statewide during migration. It breeds in the Chama, Rio Grande, Zuni, San Francisco, Gila, and probably the Hondo basins and in the San Juan and western Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Areas of key habitat include breeding areas in the vicinities of Zuni (McKinley County), Corrales (Sandoval County) to upper Elephant Butte Reservoir (Sierra County), Glenwood-Pleasanton (Catron County), and Cliff-Redrock (Grant County).

Riparian habitat loss or degradation and related impacts (e.g., parasitism by brown-headed cowbirds) are the primary causes leading to the endangered status of the southwestern willow flycatcher. Most of the areas still known to support the bird have low levels of livestock grazing (or none). Potential threats from pesticides may also affect the southwestern willow flycatcher. The habitats it uses in wintering grounds are unknown. However, tropical deforestation may restrict wintering habitat for this and other neotropical migrants.

The protection and restoration of riparian habitats are essential steps in the conservation of breeding southwestern willow flycatchers in New Mexico; key elements are an overstory of tall trees, an understory of smaller trees or large shrubs, and nearby areas of surface water. This species is an indicator species for the health of southwestern riparian ecosystems. Conservation of the southwestern willow flycatcher would aid in efforts to conserve riparian habitats. No known breeding southwestern willow flycatchers occur on public lands within the Farmington Field Office area, and there are no historic records of nesting southwestern willow flycatchers on BLM-administered lands. However, singing flycatchers (not necessarily southwestern willow flycatchers) have been heard on BLM lands. These individuals were considered to be migrants (BLM 1999b). The San Juan, Animas, and La Plata Rivers in San Juan County are migration corridors for the species. One nesting pair of southwestern willow flycatchers was confirmed on the Navajo Indian Reservation west of Shiprock (San Juan County) (BLM 1999b).

Currently, the Farmington Field Office has a checkerboard land ownership pattern involving private, state, and tribal lands, and lands managed by other federal entities (Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers). The BLM has management authority for about 7% of the riverbank habitat in San Juan County. The BLM

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river tract lands are widely scattered and are composed of 44 isolated tracts. The tracts range in size from 5 to 200 acres, but actual riparian habitat usually composes only a small portion of the tract acreage. These 44 tracts of BLM land are generally surrounded by private lands, and most of the water sources and associated riparian habitat along the river corridors in San Juan County are controlled by private landowners or the Navajo Indian Tribe.

The Farmington Field Office began conducting willow flycatcher surveys in 1993. Nine tracts on the La Plata River were surveyed, and no flycatchers were detected. In 1994, portions of Pump Canyon, three San Juan River tracts, and nine La Plata River tracts were surveyed, and no flycatchers were detected. In 1995, four San Juan River tracts and nine La Plata River tracts were surveyed. One singing willow flycatcher was detected on the San Juan River Gallegos tract. The bird did not stay in the area, and after biologists with the USFWS were contacted, the bird was determined to be a migrant. One tract on the La Plata River and one tract on San Juan River were surveyed in 1996, and no willow flycatchers were detected. During 1993 to 1996, only tracts that had legal access were surveyed. The remaining tracts do not have legal access and were not surveyed.

During 1997, all 44 sites within the Farmington Field Office that could provide flycatcher habitat were visited and evaluated. Of these sites, 10 did not support sufficient willow flycatcher habitat to warrant a survey. The remaining 34 tracts were surveyed according to accepted protocol by BLM personnel. During the May 15–31 survey, 14 willow flycatchers were detected. During the June 1–21 survey, one willow flycatcher was detected. No willow flycatchers were detected during the last survey during June 22–July 10. No nesting activity was observed on the Farmington Field Office lands

in 1997, and all the birds detected were deemed to be migrants.

All designated potential habitat was surveyed again in 1998. During the May 15–31 survey, one willow flycatcher was detected; during the June 1–21 survey, seven willow flycatchers were detected; and during the June 22–July 10 survey, no willow flycatchers were detected.

In 1999, the top six priority river tracts were surveyed, and no willow flycatchers were detected. No breeding activity on BLM lands in San Juan County has been documented.

Potential Issue – Livestock Grazing Management Activities: Table B.2 lists the livestock grazing management activities occurring within those riparian areas that have been identified as having short-term potential, long-term potential, or current habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher. All allotments that contain designated potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat have riparian vegetation monitoring programs consisting of riparian vegetation trend studies or utilization studies. The riparian vegetation trend studies are monitored every three years; the Bradshaw tract utilization study is conducted every year that livestock graze the allotment. Riparian vegetation monitoring summary reports will be supplied to the USFWS, and the BLM will coordinate with the USFWS to ensure that potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat is maintained or improved.

Planned monitoring activities will be implemented for the following allotments.

Allotment 5140. This allotment contains three designated La Plata River tract riparian areas located about 8 miles upstream from the confluence of the La Plata River and the San Juan River. These river tracts are named La Plata Nos. 1, 2, and 3 in the Farmington

**TABLE B.2 Livestock Grazing Management within Riparian Areas
Identified as Current or Potential Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Habitat**

Riparian Area	Riparian Area Size (acres)	Livestock Grazing (Yes/No)	Identified Habitat ^a Potential
Bradshaw	7	Yes - dormant season	CH
Blanco	75	Yes - dormant season	ST
Animas 1	15	No	ST
Animas 3	7	No	ST
Valdez	60	No	ST
Subdivision	4	No	ST
South Bloomfield	50	No	LT
Gallegos Canyon	20	No	LT
Bull Calf	5	No	LT
Pump Canyon No. 2	20	Yes - dormant season	LT
Pump Canyon No. 3	15	Yes - dormant season	LT
Pump Canyon No. 1	18	Yes - dormant season	LT
Pump Canyon No. 4	10	Yes - dormant season	LT
Bloomfield	10	No	LT
Kutz	5	No	LT
La Plata No. 1	6	Yes - dormant season	LT
Jewett Valley	5	No	LT
Schneider	3	No	LT
Wheeler	2	No	LT
Santa Rosa	4	No	LT
Animas No. 8	4	No	LT
La Plata No. 2	5	Yes - dormant season	LT
La Plata No. 4	5	Yes - dormant season	LT
La Plata No. 6	12	Yes - dormant season	LT
La Plata No. 7	20	No	LT
La Plata No. 5	3	Yes - dormant season	LT
La Plata No. 8	8	No	LT
La Plata No. 3	2	Yes - dormant season	LT
Archuleta	3	Yes - dormant season	LT
Simon Canyon	1	No	LT
La Plata	5	No	LT
Desert Hills	10	Yes - SWWF habitat excluded by fence	LT
La Plata No. 10	0.5	No	LT
La Plata No. 9	6	No	LT

^a CH = current habitat; LT = long-term; ST = short-term.

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Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a).

La Plata River Tract No. 1 has about 0.48 mile of frontage on both sides of the river. The riparian zones extend from about 15 to 60 meters from the river. The riparian zone vegetation is composed of willow, saltcedar, Russian olive, and cottonwood trees. Along the west bank, most of the willows are less than 3 meters in height and are very patchy. The east bank has a few willows less than 2 meters high. Saltcedar grows along both banks in clumps and patches but not in continuous stands. A few large, old cottonwood trees grow throughout the riparian area but do not provide a continuous overstory. The best southwestern willow flycatcher habitat is located on the northwest corner of the tract in an old water channel. This area is about 30 meters wide and extends for about 150 meters. A good stand of willow exists in this old channel; the willows are about 4 meters tall and have average densities of about 60 to 70%. Russian olive trees grow along the sides of the willow stands. These Russian olive trees are about 5 to 6 meters tall and have densities of up to 70%. No surface water is present in the old water channel nor is there any visible evidence of flooding. The uplands to the east of the river tract have sandy loam soils that support rice grass, galleta grass, blue gramma grass, sage brush, and pinon-juniper trees. The riparian habitat on La Plata River Tract No. 1 was rated as potential habitat in the long term (4 to 10 years). The tract was rated as functioning-at risk (FAR), with a static trend in a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

La Plata River Tract No. 2 has about 0.2 mile of river frontage. The vegetation on the east bank is dominated by saltcedar that is growing in clumps and patches, not in continuous stands. The saltcedar is about 2 to 4 meters tall, has densities of 20 to 50%, and extends about 20 to 40 meters from the water's edge. Some short (less than 2 meters) scattered

willows grow in a narrow band along the river bank. About 1/3 acre of cottonwood canopy is present on the east bank. These cottonwoods are about 10 to 20 meters in height and provide canopy coverage of about 60%. There is some cottonwood regeneration on the east bank; about 20 young trees less than 2 meters tall were observed. The west bank supports an old cottonwood gallery forest of about 3 acres. The cottonwoods are about 10 to 15 meters high and provide canopy coverage of about 50 to 60%. Scattered saltcedars grow among the cottonwoods, and some Russian olive trees are invading the area, especially near the river bank. The Russian olive grows to heights of about 7 meters, but the trees are scattered and do not form a continuous stand. A narrow band of willows is growing along the river, but they are generally less than 2 meters tall, have densities of less than 40%, and extend less than 5 meters from the water's edge. A wetland area is present in the extreme northwest corner of the tract; however, just a small portion (< 0.1 acre) of it is on BLM surface; the remainder is on private land. The willows in the BLM portion of the wetland are about 3 meters tall and have a density of about 70%. This tract was rated as potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat in the long term (4 to 10 years). The tract was rated as FAR with a static trend in a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

La Plata River Tract No. 3 has about 0.12 mile of river frontage. The riparian area is about 1.5 acres in size and is located between the river channel and a bluff on the east side of the river. The riparian area is a declining cottonwood gallery that now has many dead and down trees among the old living trees. The living cottonwoods are about 10 to 15 meters tall and provide a canopy coverage of about 40%. There is some cottonwood regeneration along the river bank. Some scattered Russian olive trees are present at heights of 10 meters, but they do not form continuous stands. Saltcedar grows in patches and clumps through-

out the riparian area. The largest patches of saltcedar are less than 1 acre. One small stand of willow less than 1 acre grows along the river bank. This tract was rated as potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat in the long term (4 to 10 years) and was rated as FAR with a static trend in a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys have been conducted on the three riparian tracts in Allotment 5140 in 1994, 1995, 1997, and 1998. These birds are known to migrate through the area, but none has been detected, and no nesting activity has been documented on the allotment.

Effects Analysis: All of the potential flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5140 is contained in the three designated river tracts: La Plata River Tract Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Private lands border the western boundaries of all of the river tracts and are used for residential housing and agriculture. In the past, livestock from these private lands have negatively impacted the riparian habitat because boundary fences were either in disrepair or nonexistent. The three river tracts were cadastral surveyed during the fall of 1998 and were fenced during the fall of 1998. The new fences will protect the riparian areas from unauthorized grazing.

The Farmington Field Office issued a Proposed Decision on October 29, 1998, prescribing deferment from grazing from May 1–September 30 on the riparian areas in the three river tracts. Livestock grazing on the allotment during the dormant season is restricted to the uplands. The operator is allowed to water sheep in the La Plata River on the river tracts. Access to water across the river tracts is authorized as a term and condition of the permit. As outlined in the permit, the operator must herd the livestock to the river to water and then herd livestock away from the riparian areas after the livestock have watered. The operator is not

authorized to graze or camp in the riparian areas of the allotment. This arrangement has worked well in the past, and the riparian vegetation on the allotment shows no effects from livestock watering in the river.

A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential southwestern flycatcher habitat. A vegetation monitoring method was chosen after review of BLM Technical Report (TR) 1737-3 (*Inventory and Monitoring of Riparian Areas*) [BLM 1989]. Vegetation structure monitoring was chosen as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability. The habitat on this allotment was rated as having potential flycatcher habitat in the long term: 4 to 10 years. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5140 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for the southwestern

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willow flycatcher. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting southwestern willow flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing because grazing does not occur on the designated potential habitat during any time of the year.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat would be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers.

Allotment 5010. This allotment contains three designated La Plata River tract riparian

areas. These tracts are located about 7 miles upstream from the confluence of the La Plata River and the San Juan River. These river tracts are named La Plata Nos. 4, 5, and 6 in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Habitat Management Plan (BLM 1998a).

La Plata River Tract No. 4 contains about 0.38 mile of river frontage and has about 4 to 5 acres of riparian habitat. The riparian habitat is generally confined to narrow bands of vegetation that extend an average of less than 20 meters from the river channel. The riparian habitat is dominated by saltcedar that grows in clumps and patches. The saltcedar reaches heights of 2 to 5 meters and has densities of 30 to 60%. Willows grow in a very narrow band and extend less than 10 meters from the river channel. This band of willows is not continuous along the entire 0.38 mile of frontage; rather, the willows are patchy and intermittent. The willows grow to a height of about 2 to 3 meters tall and have densities of about 40 to 60%. The entire tract was heavily impacted by wild fire in 1996. Most of the saltcedar on the tract has been burned and is in the process of resprouting; the resprouts are about 2 meters tall. Some dryer uplands outside of the riparian bands support some scattered cottonwood and New Mexico olive trees. The understory in these uplands is dominated by sagebrush and rabbitbrush. No marshes or wetlands occur outside of the river channel. The habitat on this tract was rated as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. The tract was rated as FAR with a static trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

La Plata River Tract No. 5 is a 40-acre parcel that has 0.08 mile of river frontage and about 3 acres of riparian habitat. A narrow 10- to 15-meter-wide band of mixed willow and saltcedar grows along the river channel. This band of vegetation has a canopy cover of about 60% and is composed of about 30% willow and 30% saltcedar. The willow grows to about 2 to

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3 meters in height, and the saltcedar grows to about 4 to 5 meters high. Some Russian olive trees grow in this band of vegetation. In places, the Russian olive trees have about 30% canopy cover and grow about 6 to 8 meters high. Outside of the band of willow/saltcedar, scattered mature cottonwood trees grow to heights of 12 to 17 meters and provide canopy covers up to 20%. There is little evidence of cottonwood regeneration on the tract. The ground cover under the cottonwoods consists of a mixture of sagebrush, greasewood, four-wing saltbush, and some galleta grass. The potential to develop good southwestern willow flycatcher habitat is limited because of the narrowness of the strip of willow/saltcedar vegetation along the river channel and the lack of any other wetland areas on the tract. This tract was rated as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. The tract was rated as FAR with a static trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

La Plata River Tract No. 6 is a 40-acre parcel of land with the La Plata river running through the middle of it. The tract supports about 5 to 7 acres of riparian vegetation that exists in a narrow band along the banks of the river channel. Saltcedar is the dominant plant, with some willow near the water's edge. Most of the saltcedar is mature and grows in patchy, non-continuous stands that reach 4 to 6 meters in height and with densities of about 30 to 40%. Some scattered patches of saltcedar may reach densities of 60 to 70%. Most of the willow grows in a very narrow band along the river and reaches heights of 1 to 2.5 meters tall with densities of about 20 to 30%. The band of saltcedar/willow extends about 5 to 25 meters from the channel, with an average width of about 8 to 10 meters. Some Russian olive and cottonwood trees grow within the band of saltcedar/willow. The canopy density of some of the patches of Russian olives can reach 30 to 40% along the outer edge of the saltcedar/willow band. In general, the total canopy density

of the combined vegetation does not exceed 50%. One patch of willow, saltcedar, and Russian olive is about 35 meters in length and 10 meters in width and has a canopy density of about 80 to 90% at heights from 3 to 6 meters. Mature cottonwood trees are scattered throughout the tract but do not provide continuous canopy cover. Some cottonwood regeneration is occurring on exposed sand bars and on open sandy areas. No other sources of water or wetlands occur on the tract other than the river channel. There are some recreation impacts on the tract from all-terrain vehicle riders and horse riders. The area to the west of the tract is residential, and people that live nearby are using the tract for recreation. This tract was rated as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. The tract was rated as FAR with an upward trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys have been conducted on the three riparian tracts in Allotment 5010 in 1994, 1995, 1997, and 1998. One willow flycatcher was detected on La Plata River Tract No. 5 on May 30, 1997; however, follow-up surveys in 1997 were negative and no birds or nesting activity were detected again. One willow flycatcher was detected on La Plata River Tract No. 4 on June 18, 1998, but again, follow-up surveys in 1998 were negative, and no birds or nesting activity were detected again. The birds were deemed to be migrants. Southwestern willow flycatchers migrate through the area, but no nesting activity has been documented on the allotment.

Effects Analysis: All of the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5010 is contained in the three designated river tracts: La Plata Nos. 4, 5, and 6. However, only small portions of tracts 4 and 5 are included in the allotment. Water access is provided on both tracts in a narrow access point

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less than 100 feet in length. The designated potential willow flycatcher habitat is outside of the water access points. Tract No. 6 has not received authorized grazing because of bordering private land issues. Private lands border the western boundaries of all of the river tracts. The private lands are used for residential housing and agriculture. In the past, livestock from these private lands have negatively impacted the riparian habitat because boundary fences were either in disrepair or nonexistent. The three river tracts were cadastral surveyed during the fall of 1998 and were fenced during the summer of 1999. The new fences will protect the riparian areas from unauthorized grazing.

The Farmington Field Office issued a Proposed Decision on October 29, 1998, prescribing deferment from grazing from May 1–September 30 on the riparian areas in the three river tracts. Livestock grazing on the river tracts during the dormant season at the levels outlined in the preferred alternative is not expected to negatively impact the riparian vegetation. A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment. A vegetation monitoring method was selected after review of BLM TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was selected as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and

composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability. The habitat on this allotment was rated as having potential long-term (4 to 10 years) flycatcher habitat. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be reevaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by this species.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5010 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on Allotment 5010, the proposed action poses a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for the southwestern willow flycatcher. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not likely occur because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

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- The progression of potential habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing. On tracts 4 and 5, livestock are authorized to access the La Plata River for water but are not authorized to graze in designated potential flycatcher habitat. Tract 6 has not received authorized livestock grazing during the past several years because of issues with bordering private landowners. Vegetation monitoring was established in potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat in 1999. If impacts to riparian vegetation by livestock are identified, the Farmington Field Office would work in coordination with the USFWS to determine what additional protective measures would be appropriate.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat would be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers. If it is determined that the area has the potential to support the necessary vegetation community, a utilization monitoring system would be established.

Allotment 5044. Two designated riparian areas are within Allotment 5044. Gobernador Canyon enters the San Juan River within the allotment. The first mile of the canyon east of the San Juan River is within the allotment and has been designated as riparian habitat. This area was rated as FAR with an upward trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994). The riparian habitat was evaluated in 1997, and it

was determined that it does not contain potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. This portion of Gobernador Canyon is not included in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a).

The second riparian area in the allotment is located along the north bank of the San Juan River. This riparian area was designated as the Archuleta River tract in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP. The tract was listed in the HMP as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) flycatcher habitat. The Archuleta River tract is just down river from the town of Navajo Dam. The tract was rated as PFC in 1998. The tract contains a designated fisherman's access and provides parking for fishermen on the uplands above the riparian area. The tract contains a total of about 3 acres of riparian habitat that is split by an irrigation diversion channel. North of the channel, about 2 acres of riparian area are located between the channel bank and a sandstone bluff. This area has about 15 scattered mature cottonwood trees with an understory of wheatgrass, saltgrass, and rabbitbrush. Along the bank, scattered saltcedar are about 2 to 3 meters tall but provide densities of less than 20%. A small spring or seep under the sandstone bluff is the water source supporting about 0.2 acre of cattails and about 0.25 acre of taller and denser vegetation composed of about 50% saltcedar, 30% Russian olive, and 20% New Mexico olive. This 0.25-acre stand is about 3 to 4 meters tall and has a density of about 60 to 70%. There are no willows on the north bank.

The south bank of the diversion channel forms part of an island between the diversion channel and the river channel. About 1 acre of riparian habitat exists on this island. Some scattered willows grow on the island to a height of about 2 meters. Numerous young Russian olive trees are becoming established on the island. Saltgrass provides a nearly continuous understory under the Russian olive trees. A few

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very small patches of saltcedar/Russian olive vegetation on the island reach heights of about 3 to 4 meters and densities of 50 to 60%.

On October 29, 1998, a Proposed Decision was issued prescribing deferment of the riparian areas of Allotment 5044 from grazing from May 1–September 30 to protect and enhance riparian vegetation in accordance with the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). There is no sign of livestock grazing activity in the riparian areas of the Archuleta tract. Livestock have not grazed the riparian areas of the tract due to natural sandstone bluff barriers. The Archuleta tract was surveyed for flycatchers according to accepted protocol in 1997 and 1998. No willow flycatchers were detected in 1997. In 1998, two willow flycatchers were detected during the second survey period of June 1–21. These birds did not stay in the area and were deemed to be migrants. No designated southwestern willow flycatcher critical habitat is present on this allotment.

Effects Analysis: The Archuleta River tract is used by recreational fishermen. People using the area for fishing usually remain on established trails leading to the water's edge, and the riparian vegetation outside of the trails is not impacted. The future use of this tract will continue to be dominated by recreational fishing; this activity, however, is not expected to degrade the riparian habitat. The private land upstream from the tract is developed for residential housing, and the majority of riparian vegetation has been removed. The private land below the tract is extensively grazed and does not support flycatcher habitat.

After two years of surveying all potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5044, no nesting activity has been detected. The Farmington Field Office will continue to implement the Southwestern Willow

Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). If an active nest is found in the future on Allotment 5044, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP. If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM will work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment. A vegetation monitoring method was selected after review of BLM TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was selected as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5044 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a "May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Effect" situation for this species. The

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rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing because livestock are excluded from the designated flycatcher habitat by a natural barrier of sandstone cliffs.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat would be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by this species.

Allotment 5144. The Blanco River tract has an area of 203 acres and has about 0.67 mile of river frontage. The vegetation along the river

bank is dominated by saltcedar and Russian olive. A band of saltcedar/Russian olive vegetation extends an average of 20 to 30 meters from the water's edge. This band of vegetation is composed of about 30% Russian olive and 60% saltcedar with some cottonwood and New Mexico olive mixed in. This vegetation reaches heights of 3 to 6 meters and has densities of 40 to 60%, with some smaller areas reaching densities of 80%. Beyond the band of vegetation by the water's edge, an open cottonwood bosque extends for about 300 meters on the north bank. This area is dominated by mature cottonwood trees that provide an average canopy cover of about 10 to 20%. The soil in this bosque is very sandy and supports grasses, rabbitbrush, and some scattered saltcedar. There are also many areas of exposed sand.

On the north portion of the tract, a wetland extends east to west between the open bosque and a ridge of bluffs. This wetland runs about 0.6 mile through the tract and then continues onto private lands to the west of the tract. The hydrology of this wetland is influenced by an irrigation ditch that runs along the top of the bluffs. The western 0.3 mile of the wetland has permanent open water that slowly flows to the west. The vegetation that surrounds the open water is dominated by Russian olive and saltcedar. The Russian olive forms an impenetrable wall of vegetation about 6 meters high. In other places, saltcedar grows in a patchy fashion in the water-saturated soil. These patches of saltcedar do not form any large, continuous areas of cover.

The Blanco River tract riparian area is included in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). The dense Russian olive vegetation surrounding the open water in the western 0.3 mile of the Blanco River tract was rated as potential short-term (1 to 3 years) flycatcher habitat. A management prescription outlined in the HMP was the elimination of livestock grazing in potential

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flycatcher habitats during the growing season to protect and enhance riparian vegetation. In addition, cattle do not penetrate the dense Russian olive and do not impact this vegetation. Authorized grazing on the allotment is limited to the dormant season (November 1– March 31). An allotment boundary fence was constructed in 1999 to exclude occasional unauthorized grazing on the allotment by livestock from surrounding private lands. The Blanco riparian area was rated as PFC during a 1998 PFC survey (BLM 1998a).

Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys were conducted in 1997 and 1998. One willow flycatcher was detected on May 25, 1997, and again on June 10, 1997. No willow flycatchers were detected during follow-up surveys in 1997, and no nesting activity was found in 1997. The birds detected in 1997 were deemed to be migrants. No flycatchers were detected in surveys in 1998 or 1999. No willow flycatcher nesting activity has been detected on the allotment.

Effects Analysis: The 203-acre Blanco River tract is surrounded by private lands on three sides. Private land use around the tract is dominated by residential housing and agriculture. Most of the riparian vegetation on the surrounding private lands has been impacted by livestock grazing. The Blanco River tract has been positively impacted by an irrigation canal located on the uplands directly above the riparian areas. The irrigation canal supplies the riparian area with water that seeps out of the canal and travels downhill underground into the riparian area. This creates an artificial wetland that could be negatively impacted by improvements to the irrigation canal system. The BLM has no control over the irrigation system above the Blanco River tract.

After two years of surveying all potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5144, no nesting activity has been

detected. The Farmington Field Office will continue to implement the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). If an active nest is found in the future on Allotment 5144, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the HMP. If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM will work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

Livestock grazing on the allotment during the dormant season at the levels authorized is not expected to negatively impact the riparian vegetation. A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment. A vegetation monitoring method was chosen after review of BLM TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was chosen as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5144 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher

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habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for this species. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing because livestock do not utilize the designated flycatcher habitat consisting of dense Russian olive stands surrounding open water. A monitoring program was established that would document any change in species composition of potential willow flycatcher habitat. Riparian vegetation species that are palatable to livestock may become established. If impacts to palatable riparian vegetation are identified, the Farmington Field Office would work in coordination with the USFWS to determine what

additional protective measures would be appropriate.

- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat would be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat has the potential to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by this species.

Allotment 5150. The Desert Hills River tract is composed of 200 acres of land that has about 30 acres of riparian areas concentrated along 0.24 mile of frontage on the San Juan River approximately 35 miles downstream from Navajo Dam. The northwest quadrant of the northwest quadrant of section 35 contains most of the riparian acreage where the main river channel has braided into three smaller channels. An island formed by the channels contains about 12 acres of dense Russian olive woodland. The Russian olive woodland grows to about 4 to 8 meters tall and has densities of 50 to 80%. The island contains some open areas dominated by grasses — Rabbitfoot Grass, *Bromus*, *Scirpus* and herbaceous dicots, including cocklebur, *Aster*, and compositae to 2 meters tall. The island is bounded on the north by a small channel that has moderately slow flowing water. Some willows grow along this channel; however, they are only 1 to 2 meters tall and do not form any dense cover. The habitat along the river channels and on the island was rated as marginal flycatcher habitat in a 1997 flycatcher habitat suitability survey (BLM 1998b).

The Desert Hills riparian area is included in the Farmington Field Office Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). Desert Hills was rated as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) flycatcher habitat. A management prescription outlined in the plan was the

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elimination of livestock grazing in potential flycatcher habitats during the growing season to protect and enhance riparian vegetation. A fence has been constructed to exclude livestock grazing from the designated flycatcher potential habitat that exists along the river channel and on the island. None of the designated potential habitat is grazed at any time of year.

Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys were conducted in 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1998. No willow flycatchers were detected. The Desert Hills riparian area was rated as PFC during a 1998 PFC survey (BLM 1998a).

Effects Analysis: The 200-acre Desert Hills River tract is completely surrounded by private lands. Private land use around the tract is dominated by residential housing. A boundary fence around the tract has been built and maintained by the grazing permittee. The permittee also built the riparian exclusion fence that protects the potential flycatcher habitat. Private landowners around the tract have been known to cut the fence to provide access for off-road vehicles (OHVs) and unauthorized livestock grazing. The authorized permittee has worked with the BLM to report unauthorized use violations. Most of the riparian vegetation on the surrounding private lands has been cleared for housing or agriculture.

After four years of surveying all potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5150, no nesting activity has been detected. The Farmington Field Office will continue to implement the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP. If an active nest is found in the future on allotment 5150, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the HMP. If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5150 and no occupied habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a "*May Affect – Not likely to Adversely Affect*" situation for this species. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential willow flycatcher habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing because livestock do not utilize the designated willow flycatcher habitat because of a riparian enclosure fence.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced.

Allotment 5133. The Bradshaw tract is located along the San Juan River approximately 55 miles downstream from Navajo Dam. The

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tract has about 3/4 mile of river frontage and contains about 20 acres of land, of which 5 to 7 acres support riparian habitat. The extreme east portion of the tract contains about 1 acre of willow habitat. During high water flows in the spring, this patch of willows is flooded with about 0.5 meter of water. Within this acre of habitat, willow stands are patchy, and the willows within these patches stand about 3 to 4 meters tall. The density of the stands varies from a high of about 90% to a low of about 20%. Some Russian olive trees are invading these small stands of willow. The Russian olive trees are about 5 to 6 meters tall and have a canopy cover of about 5 to 10% in the stands of willow, and about 40 to 60% around the perimeter of the willow. Some mature cottonwood trees are growing around the perimeter of the willow stand and provide a canopy cover of less than 20%.

Another patch of approximately 1 acre of willow is located about 250 meters east of the east boundary of the tract. This willow stand is located beside an irrigation ditch that returns water to the river. Beavers have dammed the ditch and flooded an old river channel. The willows grow in and around this old channel. The beavers have created favorable water conditions for the creation of this willow stand, but they have also foraged on the willows and reduced the stand density. In the flooded portion of the old channel, willows grow to 3 to 4 meters in height and have variable densities because of the beavers. Densities can range from 20 to 80%. Willows also grow on the higher ground around the old channel. The willows in this area are typically about 1 meter shorter, and densities range from 30 to 60%. Some cottonwood and Russian olive trees are encroaching into the willows. In some places, the Russian olives form a dense stand of vegetation about 5 to 6 meters tall.

The height and density of willows decrease and the density of saltcedar increases as the tract

progresses toward the west boundary. Willows are nearly absent from the middle of the tract to the west boundary. The western two-thirds of the tract is dominated by saltcedar and Russian olive. Intermittent stands of saltcedar grow to a height of 2 to 4 meters and vary in density from 20 to 70%. Russian olive trees grow 3 to 6 meters tall and vary in density from 10 to 40%. The western two-thirds of the tract has open areas that support alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) and inland saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*).

The Bradshaw tract has been severely impacted by trespass grazing by livestock of neighboring private landowners. The boundary fences were either not intact or in the wrong location. The Bradshaw River tract riparian area is included in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). The tract was rated as unoccupied, currently potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat. A management prescription outlined in the plan was the elimination of unauthorized livestock grazing and the restriction of authorized grazing to the dormant season in potential flycatcher habitats to protect and enhance riparian vegetation. The Bradshaw tract riparian area was rated as PFC during a 1998 PFC survey (BLM 1998a). The boundaries of the tract were surveyed and fenced in 1999.

Southwestern willow flycatcher surveys were conducted in 1997, 1998, and 1999. One willow flycatcher was detected on May 31, 1997, but follow-up surveys in 1997 were negative and no birds or nesting activity were detected; the bird was deemed a migrant. Three birds were detected on June 8, 1998, but again follow-up surveys in 1998 were negative, and no birds or nesting activity were detected. Again, the three birds were deemed to be migrants. No birds were detected in 1999. Willow flycatchers migrate through the area, but no nesting activity has been documented on the allotment.

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Effects Analysis: The Bradshaw River tract is surrounded by private land on the north bank of the river, and the Navajo Tribe owns the land on the south bank. Private land use around the tract is dominated by residential housing and agriculture. Most of the riparian vegetation on the surrounding private lands has been impacted by livestock grazing. The tract has been positively impacted by irrigation canals and return ditches that provide standing water to portions of the tract.

The boundaries of Allotment 5133 and the boundaries of the Bradshaw River tract are the same; the allotment is the river tract. The allotment has not had any authorized grazing for several years due to the permittee's legal challenge to the ownership of the base property for this allotment. The legal issues have been resolved, and the permittee requested to resume grazing operations in 2000. The permittee was authorized to graze three cows from July 1 to October 31. Summer grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a) is unacceptable. A proposed decision was issued in November 1999 to change the authorized grazing season from December 1 to February 28.

Livestock grazing on the allotment during the dormant season at the levels outlined in the preferred alternative is not expected to negatively impact the riparian vegetation. A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment. A vegetation monitoring method was selected after review of BLM TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was selected as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical*

Reference (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability. In addition to trend monitoring, a small enclosure is scheduled to be constructed in 2000 to aid in the determination of any utilization by livestock. Utilization of willows would be monitored during years that the permittee actually grazes the allotment using the Extensive Browse Method to establish the percent of stems utilized. If impacts are identified, the Farmington Field Office would work in coordination with the USFWS to determine what additional protective measures would be appropriate.

After two years of surveying all potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5133, no nesting activity has been detected. The Farmington Field Office will continue to implement the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP. If an active nest is found in the future on Allotment 5133, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the HMP. If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM will work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5133 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has

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determined a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for this species. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success, and if so, the BLM would work in coordination with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential willow flycatcher habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing because the allotment is lightly grazed by three cows during the winter. Riparian vegetation trend and utilization studies have been established and if impacts to riparian vegetation are identified, the BLM would coordinate with the USFWS to determine what additional protective measures are appropriate.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced.

Allotment 5041. This allotment is located near the San Juan River. The allotment is split into two sections. The north section is north of the San Juan River and includes approximately 3 miles of Pump Canyon; the south section is south of the San Juan River. The riparian areas along the San Juan River between the two sections of the allotment are privately owned, and the allotment does not include San Juan River riparian habitat.

The Pump Canyon Reaches Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are included in the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). These reaches provide marginal willow flycatcher habitat and were rated as potential long-term (4 to 10 years) flycatcher habitat. A management prescription outlined in the plan was to eliminate livestock grazing in potential flycatcher habitats during the growing season to protect and enhance riparian vegetation. On October 29, 1998, a Proposed Decision was issued prescribing deferment of the riparian areas of the allotment from grazing from May 1 to September 30. The BLM constructed a pasture fence on the allotment during the fall of 1998 to create a riparian pasture to facilitate the grazing deferment decision.

Pump Canyon Reach 1 T30N, R9W, sec 24. Reach 1 is the lowest reach and is located in section 24. The active channel varies in width from about 8 to 15 meters. Surface water in the channel is intermittent with more surface water available in early spring and then drying out later in the summer. A high volume of water flows through the channel during storm events. The dominant vegetation species along the channel is saltcedar. In most areas, the width of the saltcedar is from 5 to 20 meters and reaches heights from 2 to 5 meters. In most areas, the stands of saltcedar are patchy and do not provide continuous cover. Two point bars have about 2 to 3 acres of saltcedar stands that reach heights of 5 meters and densities of 60%. One pothole contains permanent water on one of the

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point bars. A few short willows are growing along the wash. Most of the willows are about 2 meters high and have densities of less than 30%. A few old growth cottonwoods are found along the riparian area. Except for one location of about 2 acres, there is very little cottonwood revegetation.

The potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat is limited to the two point bars, each of which supports about 2 acres of saltcedar; however, this habitat is marginal at best and may not have the potential to attain the characteristics of suitable willow flycatcher habitat in 10 years or even 20 years. Reach 1 was rated as FAR with a static trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994). Reach 1 was surveyed for willow flycatchers in 1994, 1997, and 1998. No willow flycatchers were detected during these surveys.

Pump Canyon Reach 2 T30N R9W sec 13. Most of the improvements conducted under the Pump Canyon Riparian Activity Plan (BLM 1993) were implemented in Reach 2. A pasture fence was built in 1993; a saltcedar burn was completed in February 1993; herbicide was applied to burned saltcedar resprouts in the fall of 1993; cottonwood poles were planted in 1993; and pot holes were blasted in 1993 and 1994. Cattle have been excluded from Reach 2 since 1992, with the exception of dormant season use in 1995. The riparian vegetation has responded to these treatments in a dramatic fashion. Along the fence line between Reach 1 and Reach 2, the willows jump in height from about 1 meter on the Reach 1 side to about 2 to 2.5 meters on the Reach 2 side. The density of the willow stand also increases in Reach 2. In the burned area in the lower portion of Reach 2 of about 3 acres, sweet clover and willows are becoming established. In the lower half of Reach 2, most of the willows grow in a band along the sides of the active channel. This willow band averages about 2 to 4 meters in width, 2 to 3 meters in height, with densities of

about 40 to 60%. The active channel averages about 10 to 25 meters in width. The channel has intermittent surface water that is very shallow. Sedges grow in the sand along areas that have surface water. The vegetation that grows behind the willow band is dominated by saltcedar with some widely scattered larger cottonwood trees. The saltcedar generally grows in clumps or patches rather than in continuous stands. In the upper half of Reach 2, the channel narrows and there is more surface water. Sedges grow along most of the channel edges where surface water is available. The willows generally grow in a band along the active channel as in the lower half. In places, however, young willows less than 2 meters in height extend about 50 to 75 meters from the active channel. The upper half of Reach 2 received the most extensive saltcedar control efforts. About 10 to 12 acres were burned in the February 1993, and the resprouts were sprayed with the herbicide Arsenal (Imazapyr) in the fall of 1993. Revegetation in this area has been slow, possibly due to residual affects of the Arsenal. There are 2 blasted pothole sumps, 1 mechanically dug pond, and about 2 acres of wetland marsh on the west side of the active channel. Russian olive trees dominate about 4 acres of riparian area, and scattered Russian olive trees are found throughout the reach. The Russian olive trees average about 5 to 7 meters high; in the 4 acres of heaviest infestation, they reach densities of about 50 to 60%. Cottonwood regeneration all along Reach 2 is very impressive. The trees are from 1 to 3 meters in height and number in the thousands. There is some evidence of cattle grazing on this reach, but utilization has been very light.

The flycatcher habitat in Reach 2 is marginal. Future saltcedar control efforts will be coordinated with the USFWS. Reach 2 was rated as PFC during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994). Reach 2 was surveyed for willow flycatchers in 1994, 1997, and 1998. No willow flycatchers were detected during these surveys.

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Pump Canyon Reach 3 T30N R9W sec 12.

The active channel in Reach 3 widens to an average of about 15 to 30 meters and the surface water diminishes. Most of the riparian areas along the active channel are dominated by a saltcedar-willow complex that is about 25% willow and 75% saltcedar. Most of these stands of willow and saltcedar are short in height and reach 2 to 2.5 meters, with densities of about 30 to 60%. In some areas, the willows are absent and saltcedar dominates; however, the saltcedar stands are patchy and do not form continuous dense stands. Mature cottonwood trees are widely scattered and do not form a consistent overstory. There are some areas of cottonwood regeneration; the trees are about 2 to 3 meters in height in scattered patches along the reach. Some young Russian olive trees are becoming established but have not yet become mature dense stands. Reach 3 was surveyed for willow flycatchers in 1994, 1997, and 1998. Two willow flycatchers were detected on May 22, 1997. These birds were not relocated during follow-up surveys and were deemed to be migrants. No nesting willow flycatchers have been detected.

Effects Analysis: After three years of surveying all potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5041, no nesting activity has been detected. If an active nest is found in the future on Allotment 5041, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the Farmington Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM will work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat. A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment.

A vegetation monitoring method was selected after review of BLM TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was chosen as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by this species.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5041 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a "May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect" situation for this species. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently

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potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.

- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success. If so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential willow flycatcher habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing. A riparian pasture fence was constructed in 1998 to facilitate growing season deferment. A riparian vegetation monitoring program was established, and if impacts due to the grazing program are identified, the BLM would work in coordination with the USFWS to determine what additional protective measures would be appropriate. At this time, it is unknown if these riparian areas have the potential to provide suitable willow flycatcher habitat.
- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first trend monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be reevaluated to determine if the habitat has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers. If the area is found to have the potential to support the necessary vegetation community, a utilization monitoring system will be established.

Allotment 5048. This allotment is located approximately 4 miles north of the San Juan River. The extreme eastern edge of the allotment contains 2 miles of the Pump Canyon Drainage. One mile of Pump Canyon within the allotment is owned by the State of New Mexico. The other mile of Pump Canyon is BLM land and was designated as Pump Canyon Reach 4 riparian area and was rated as FAR with an upward trend during a 1994 PFC survey (BLM 1994).

The active channel of the Pump Canyon Reach 4 riparian area runs from north to south. The southern ½ mile has a channel width of approximately 15 to 25 meters and usually contains surface water only during storm and winter snow runoff events. The northern ½ mile narrows to about 8 to 15 meters, and surface water is more prevalent and prolonged in some areas year long. Most of the riparian area adjacent to the active channel supports a narrow band of saltcedar that is about 4 to 6 meters tall, but only about 5 meters wide. There are two areas of about 3 acres each that have dense stands of continuous saltcedar about 3 to 6 meters tall, with densities of about 60 to 70%. There are a few scattered old cottonwood trees, but there is no noticeable cottonwood regeneration.

The Pump Canyon Reach 4 riparian area presently contains marginal flycatcher habitat. This habitat is limited to bands of saltcedar along the active channel and two, 3-acre areas of dense stands of saltcedar. The reach was surveyed for willow flycatchers in 1994, 1997, and 1998. No willow flycatchers have been detected on this allotment. Under the current grazing management program, which requires grazing deferment during the growing season, the riparian vegetation is expected to improve over time.

Effects Analysis: After three years of surveying potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat on Allotment 5048, no nesting activity has been detected. The Farmington Field Office will continue to implement the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher HMP (BLM 1998a). If an active nest is found in the future on Allotment 5048, the BLM will have a qualified and permitted biologist conduct nest monitoring in accordance with the HMP. If cowbird parasitism is identified as affecting nesting southwestern willow flycatchers as a result of this monitoring effort, the BLM will work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.

A vegetation monitoring program was established in 1999 to evaluate the trend of the potential flycatcher habitat. Riparian habitats are expected to improve under the proposed grazing program, which incorporates growing season deferment. A vegetation monitoring method was chosen after review of TR 1737-3 (BLM 1989). Vegetation structure monitoring was chosen as the most effective measure of flycatcher habitat suitability and trend. Specific monitoring methods were chosen from *Sampling Vegetation Attributes: Interagency Technical Reference* (BLM 1996). In 1999, baseline data were gathered initially by using the Line Intercept Method (BLM 1996, p. 64). Measurements establish vertical distribution, estimate cover of each layer, and measure the height of vegetation. This method was designed for measuring grass or grass-like plants, forbs, shrubs, and trees. Foliar cover, basal cover, and composition are determined. Appropriate photopoints are established to provide visual documentation of trend. Transects and photopoints will be evaluated every three years to determine trend and habitat suitability. After the first monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat indeed has the potential within 10 years to support the

minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers.

Effects Determination: Since no designated critical habitat exists on Allotment 5048 and no occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat occurs on the allotment, the BLM has determined a “*May Affect – Not Likely to Adversely Affect*” situation for this species. The rationale for this determination included the following factors:

- Disturbance of individuals or nests, predation, or parasitism would not be likely because surveys conducted in 1997 and 1998 determined that there is no occupied habitat on the allotment.
- Suitability for nesting flycatchers would not be reduced because livestock grazing in unoccupied currently potential habitat would not occur during the growing season.
- Cowbird parasitism would be unlikely because there is no occupied habitat on the allotment. If and when potential habitat becomes occupied, the nest would be monitored to determine if cowbird parasitism is a threat to nesting success. If so, the BLM would work in cooperation with the USFWS to determine the best method of reducing or eliminating this threat.
- The progression of potential willow flycatcher habitat toward becoming suitable habitat would not be impeded by livestock grazing. A riparian pasture fence was constructed in 1998 to facilitate growing season deferment. A riparian vegetation monitoring program was established, and if impacts due to the grazing program are identified, the BLM would coordinate with the USFWS to determine what additional

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protective measures are appropriate. At this time, it is unknown if these riparian areas have the potential to provide suitable willow flycatcher habitat.

- Sufficient monitoring is in place to demonstrate that habitat suitability is being maintained or enhanced. After the first trend monitoring cycle, the potential southwestern willow flycatcher habitat will be re-evaluated to determine if the habitat has the potential within 10 years to support the minimum requirements of vegetative structure required by southwestern willow flycatchers. If the area is found to have the potential to support the necessary vegetation community, a utilization monitoring system will be established.

B.2.17 Whooping Crane (*Grus americana*)

Distribution and Ecology: The whooping crane breeds primarily at Wood Buffalo National Park in Canada and winters mainly along the Gulf Coast of Texas at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. A few whooping cranes raised by foster parents (sandhill cranes) at Grays Lake, Idaho, migrate with sandhill cranes to the Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico. These birds (down from a high of 33 to now only 4) winter mainly in the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge located about 20 miles south of Socorro, New Mexico. This population is designated as a non-essential experimental population, and it is expected that these birds will die by the year 2006; pairing and reproduction of this experimental flock never occurred.

In New Mexico, whooping cranes select an open expanse of shallow water in rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and native wetlands for nightly

roosting. These sites include stockponds, marshes, and flooded grain fields. Feeding sites include these wetland types and agricultural fields (particularly with waste grain or sprouting crops). The whooping cranes feed on small grains, alfalfa, winter wheat, aquatic plants, invertebrates, and small vertebrates. They typically roost on sand bars within the Rio Grande floodplain. They seasonally move up and down the Rio Grande corridor during their spring and fall migrations; however, they would be considered rare visitors to the area (BLM 1999a). Whooping cranes adhere to ancestral breeding areas, migratory routes, and wintering grounds, thus leaving little possibility of pioneering into new regions.

The conversion of wetlands and prairies to croplands contributed to the historic drastic decline of whooping cranes. Collisions with power lines and fences, predators, and disease are known hazards to wild whooping cranes in the Rocky Mountains.

No suitable riparian/agricultural habitat occurs on BLM-administered lands in the Farmington Field Office area. In addition, the limited number of individuals left in the experimental population make it extremely unlikely that the whooping crane would occur at any of the specified riparian and associated aquatic habitats.

Effects Determination: Because the specified riparian areas and associated upland rangelands within the jurisdiction of the Farmington Field Office do not provide habitat for the whooping crane, the BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "No Effect" on this species. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species due to this action.

B.2.18 Black-Footed Ferret
(*Mustela nigripes*)

Distribution and Ecology: The black-footed ferret is generally associated with prairie dog towns in grassland plains, semiarid grasslands, and adjacent mountain basins. It is believed that the black-footed ferret was extirpated in New Mexico, since it has not been seen in the wild since 1934. However, a captive breeding project was initiated in 1998 at the Vermejo Park Ranch near Raton, Colfax County (BLM 1999a).

The decline in prairie dog colonies, and consequently the black-footed ferret, was related to prairie dog poisoning programs and land use practices that converted plains to agricultural and urban areas (BLM 1999a).

No prairie dog colonies of the size necessary to support black-footed ferrets (more than 80 acres) occur on any of the allotments associated with the riparian areas in the Farmington Field Office area. Livestock grazing is benign or beneficial to prairie dog colony development. The prairie dog population within Farmington Field Office lands appears to be stable, although it fluctuates on a regular basis, primarily because of plague (BLM 1999b).

Effects Determination: Because no suitable habitat (e.g., large prairie dog colonies) exists on allotment uplands and because riparian areas do not provide black-footed ferret habitat (coupled with the fact that the black-footed ferret was extirpated in New Mexico), the BLM has determined that implementation of riparian and aquatic habitat management would result in "No Effect" on the black-footed ferret. Thus, there would be no incremental increase in the existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Farmington Field Office area for this species because of this action.

B.2.19 Black-Tailed Prairie Dog
(*Cynomys ludovicianus*)

Distribution and Ecology: The black-tailed prairie dog historic range included 11 states, Canada, and Mexico (USFWS 2000a). The species is currently present in 10 states, including New Mexico. Historically, the black-tailed prairie dog occupied 6,640,000 acres of habitat in New Mexico; however, it is estimated, today, that there are only 39,000 acres of occupied habitat. This species is generally associated with grassland plains and other upland areas that have easily excavated soils. Riparian/wetland habitats have not been identified as being utilized by this species.

Within the Albuquerque Field Office, only Torrance County is considered potential habitat for this species (USFWS 2000b). Only small isolated parcels of BLM-administered lands occur within Torrance County, and no riparian/wetland habitat has been identified within any of these parcels.

The black-tailed prairie dog is a very social species, living in large populations called colonies or towns (USFWS 2000a). Historically, these colonies contained thousands of individuals and covered hundreds of thousands of acres; today, however, these colonies are much smaller and widely scattered.

The three major factors that have substantially impacted black-tailed prairie dog populations include (1) conversion of prairie grasslands to croplands, (2) large-scale control efforts to reduce competition between prairie dogs and livestock, and (3) sylvatic plague (USFWS 2000a). Habitat loss and control efforts appear to be the major factors that caused an overall reduction of this species habitat in late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, it is believed that sylvatic plague is the most likely factor causing recent reductions

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in overall prairie dog population (USFWS 2000a).

Effects Determination: Since the black-tailed prairie dog does not use riparian areas as habitat and the three major impacts affecting the prairie dog are not associated with management of riparian/wetland habitats, the BLM has determined that riparian and aquatic habitat management for the specific riparian areas would result in “No-Effect” for the black-tailed prairie dog. Riparian and aquatic habitat management would protect and enhance riparian areas along the tributaries of the Rio Grande (e.g., Rio Puerco). Although such management practices would benefit many wildlife species and resources with the project area, it is not expected that such efforts would measurably benefit the black-tailed prairie dog. Because riparian and aquatic habitat management would have “No Effect” on the black-tailed prairie dog, there would be no incremental increase in existing or foreseeable future cumulative impacts within the Albuquerque Field Office for this species due to this action.

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USFWS: See U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

APPENDIX C: ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT CONSULTATION

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As required under Section 7 of the Threatened and Endangered Species Act, a draft Biological Evaluation was included in the Draft *Environmental Impact Statement for Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management in the Farmington Field Office – New Mexico* (DEIS). On the basis of the draft Biological Evaluation, informal consultations were initiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The

informal consultations produced a number of comments and suggested changes that were incorporated into the final Biological Evaluation presented in the Final EIS (FEIS). Formal consultations were initiated on May 1, 2000, when the final Biological Evaluation was presented to the USFWS. The USFWS delivered a formal Biological Opinion to the Farmington Field Office on June 2, 2000.

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